Sufis of Sindh

Dr. MOTILAL JOTWANI

SUFIS OF SINDH

by

MOTILAL JOTWANI

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The martyrdom of Mansur al-Hallaj, from a manuscript of Amir Khusrau's *Diwan*, 17th Century India.

April 1986 (Chaitra 1908)

Price : 17.00

PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR, PUBLICATIONS DIVISION, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, PATIALA HOUSE, NEW DELHI-110001

Sales Emporia ● Publications Division

- SUPER BAZAR, CONNAUGHT CIRCUS, NEW DELHI-110001
- COMMERCE HOUSE, CURRIMBHOY ROAD, BALLARD PIER, BOMBAY-400038
- 8 ESPLANADE EAST, CALCUTTA-700069
- LL AUDITORIUM, ANNA SALAI, MADRAS-600002
- BIHAR STATE CO-OPERATIVE BANK BUILDING, ASHOKA RAJ PATH, PATNA-800004
- PRESS ROAD, TRIVANDRUM-695001
- 10-B, STATION ROAD, LUCKNOW-226001
- STATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM BUILDING, PUBLIC GARDEN, HYDERABAD-500004

Printed at :

K. S. Printers, S-31, Brahmpuri Seelam Pur, Delhi-110053

TO

PROFESSOR ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL

AS A TOKEN OF RESPECT AND ADMIRATION

SUFIS OF SINDH

Preface

Sufis of Sindh as also of other regions in the world have been secular. And let me say at the very outset that the word 'secular' in the Indian subcontinental tradition doesn't mean the same as in the Western one, and add that the 'sacred'—far from being contrary to the 'secular'—becomes meaningful only when it is 'secular'. In order to substantiate all this, I recount here a significant incident of my early life. The incident illustrates according to the Indian subcontinental tradition what the 'secular' is and underlines the idea that secularity enriches the spiritual life. Incidentally, it is *the* one great incident to which I owe my scholarly interest in the Indian subcontinental saint/Sufi literature.

It was January 8, 1948, and I was barely 12 at that time. Our country had been divided into India and Pakistan on a narrow religious basis on August 14/15, 1947. After the Partition, communal frenzy raised its ugly head and cities ran amuck, their streets roaring 'Allaho Akbar' and 'Har Har Mahadev'.

Originally from Rohri, a town in Sukkur district of Sindh (now in Pakistan), we were in Karachi Sindh during those days, for my father had taken up a teaching job there. We lived in a rented set of two rooms in a building belonging to a devout Muslim. Things were never bad in Sindh before the Partition, for the people, bred and brought up as they were

on the Sindhi Sufi soil, lived in peace and harmony. But on the fateful day of January 8, 1948, it looked like the world would come to an abrupt end for us. The rioters were at the gate and demanded of the house-owner to quietly hand over all the *kafirs* (non-believers, i.e , Hindus) in his premises. Huddled alongwith other members of the family in a small store-room of the house, I waited with bated breath for destruction and death. I knew what could happen to us in such circumstances, but my younger brother and sister in the cell would not quite know that they lurched between life and death.

Presently, our house-owner lied to them, saying, "The people you are looking for sailed to India yesterday...The poor creatures couldn't even take alongwith them their possessions...Do you want their belongings ?"

A few killers came inside and collected a few things—the mementoes of a sad chapter of human history! My father, a Sufi—for, there have been Sufis among the Hiudus also—took a hesitant decision on that day to migrate to the newly-formed India. Continuing to live there would have meant an untold misery for us and for the Muslim brethren sympathising with us. I remember, the two families—ours and that of Allahdino, the house-owner—were sad and gloomy for the rest of the day.

Allahdino ? He is so dear to our heart that we in our family never use any honorific before his name. God's good man, he is God himself—God without any honorific. Allahdino ? He is a commoner in the Indian subcontinent, with a name having roots in the Indian composite culture : he is Allahdino with a Sindhi-Sanskritical suffix *dino* (*dutt*, meaning 'given by, or gifted by'; Allahdino meaning gifted by Allah, or God) in his Muslim name, as there are many Hindu names like "Gurubaksh" with a Semitic suffix *baksh* (again meaning 'given by, or gifted by'; Gurubaksh meaning gifted by the Guru, or Preceptor) in them.

As the night descended on that gloomy day, my father and Allāhdino sang together the *padas*, or songs, of the great saint/Sufi poet Kabir (1399-1518). I still remember the two lines from one of the *padas* they sang :

main kahta hun ankhi dekhi
tu kahta hai kagad ki lekhi.

Kabir says, "Whatever I say is based on my life-experience with the people around, whereas what you say is written in the sacred books ."

Kabir, who was a weaver by profession, saw in his day-to-day life-world, which some philosophers have called the *Lebenswelt* and within which we carry on our "normal" activities in collaboration with other people, warp and woof coming together to become one harmonious life-fibre. A great integrator, he represented in his blood and bone the races which have inhabited India over the centuries, and in his life-pattern and thought-constructs their composite culture.

A great secularist, he presented the Indian subcontinental view of secularity, which is not the state or quality of being **non-religious** as understood in the Western tradition, but that of being **variously religious**. Deep spirituality that attends this kind of secularity makes one rise above the narrow confines of one's own religion and respect all religions of the world. And this kind of secularity, evolved as it is by the Indian mind over the centuries, suits the Indian-multi religious society the most. It is different from the one obtaining in the uni-religious societies of the West.

When the common people love Kabir so much and chant his *padas* devotedly who, then, is afraid of Kabir, the weaver ? Obviously, the one who shuts one's eyes to the process of weaving, or of warp and woof coming together. One who does not appropriate the Indian mind—the great baffling Indian

mind known for its perception of basic unity at the bottom of worldly forms fears him. The so-called learned Pandits and Moulvis (religious leaders), the hide-bound narrow experts and specialists (elite) were afraid of him in his day, as they are today.

I inherited from my parents the interest in the great Sindhi Sufi poets like Qazi Qadan, Shah Abdul Karim, Shah Inat, Shah Abdul Latif and Sachal Sarmast.

* * *

I am deeply thankful to Professor Attar Singh and Dr. S.A. Ali, the editors of *Panjab University Journal of Medieval Indian Literature* and *Studies in Islam* respectively, who published my researches on Qazi Qadan and Shah Abdul Karim in their learned journals, and also to the University of Delhi, which brought out my work on Shah Abdul Latif. This book presents revised versions of materials published in them. I am also beholden to Dr. S.S. Shashi, Director, Publications Division, Government of India, for asking me to do a book for the general reader on the Sufis of Sindh, the great integrators.

Motilal Jotwani

B-14, Dayanand Colony
Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi-110024
January 13, 1986

Contents

Introduction

The ideal of *futuwwah*, or brotherhood, which was at the basis of many associations devoted to the spread of 'purity, generosity, service of neighbour or stranger'[1] in the pre-Islamic Arabia seems to have been adhered to more strictly by the Arabian mystics before the end of the second century A.H. or in the beginning of the ninth century A.D. These mystics came to be called Sufis. The etymology of the term "Sufi" is not certain. According to some scholars, the word is connected with *safi*, the pure. The more general view refers it to *suf* or coarse wool, as these mystics used to wear woollen garments.

The Type of Tasawwuf in Sindh

The Sufis, being in the general framework of the *shari'ah*, the correct practice of the Quranic beliefs, followed different individual paths, or *tariqah*, for their spiritual endeavour. With Mansur Hallaj (858-922), metaphysical speculation showed itself prominently in Sufism, originally a doctrine of social and philanthropic nature. Mansur Hallaj said, *ana l-Huqq* (I am Truth) and the orthodox people took his life. Ali b. Uthman al-Hujwiri (b. circa 1000) in his *Kashful Mahjub* (The Unveiling of the Veiled), the oldest Persian work on Sufism, declared it heretical to say that in the state of *fana* human personality merged into or even mixed with the Divine Personality. According to him, man at that time is sustained by the

1. Cf. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, p. 114.

Divine attributes, which however, do not come to inhere in him. Al-Qushairi (986-1074) and Imam Ghazali (1058-1111) were of the view that there was no heresy in saying *ana l-Huqq* because it did not anyway subverse the *shari'ah* and, therefore, the orthodox people should not have made Mansur pay with his life for his belief. By the time of Muhiyuddin ibn Arabi (1165-1240), the Sufi metaphysical doctrine of Immanence or *wahdah al-wujud* had come to stay.

Shah Abdul Latif believed in this doctrine in particular as also in the *shari'ah* in general. Since he belonged to a family of Sayyids, the reputed religious teachers, he observed the religious practices also. But at the same time his life and work show that he was not an orthodox Muslim. There are four orthodox Sufi Orders (which all represent different forms of the *tariqah*) founded by Khwajah Abu Ishaq of Chisht (d. 940), Shaikh Muhiyuddin Abdul Qadir of Gilan (1077-1166), Shaikh Shihabuddin Umar Suhrawardi (1145-1234) and Shaikh Bahauddin Naqshbandi (1317-1389). Shah Abdul Latif is classified by G.M. Sayyid as belonging to the Qadiri *tariqah* of Shaikh Muhiyuddin Abdul Qadir of Gilan which seems, according to some scholars, likely, in view of the fact that the Qadriyya Order was much in vogue in Sindh from the 15th century, when Uch became its centre. But it seems to us from the study of both the internal and external evidences that he belonged to none of these paths. His meeting with Muhammad Zaman of Lawari (1713-1774), a Naqshabandi and also a believer in *wahdah-al-wujud*, has been described in this work. Shah Abdul Latif was so much impressed by the spirituality of Muhammad Zaman that he wished to be his *murid.* But since Muhammad Zaman abstained from *Sama'*, or the mystical dance, and Shah Abdul Latif would not keep himself away from it, the latter could not be his *murid.* Shah Abdul Latif continued with his liking for the *Sama'* even at his ripe and mature age. The orthodox Orders had their individual views on community life and routine of prayers and fasts; and they

hardly came out of *zuhd*, *ibadat*, *taqwa* and *riyadat*—the limits set by their founders. But Shah Abdul Latif attached no sole importance to them :

> Prayers and the sacred fast—
> They too are virtuous things,
> But that is another art
> which brings the Beloved face to face.[1]
>
> × × ×
>
> The people are angry at vice,
> My Lord is cross with me for my mere virtue.[2]

The type of Sufism based on the doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud of* Muhiyuddin ibn Arabi (1165-1240), and not on the orthodox *Silsilah* of Shaikh Muhiyuddin Abdul Qadir of Gilan took roots in the Indian soil very naturally, because it was more Indian in its character and expression. A little later, we shall have an occasion to dilate on this. We shall discuss now the doctrine of Immanence—*wahdah al-wujud*—and various other features of Sufism in Sindh—the features, which are evident from the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif, who is central to the present study.

Shah Abdul Latif was a constant reader of the Qur'an, the *Mathnawi* of Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273) and the Sindhi *baits* of Shah Abdul Karim (1536-1623). Lilaram Watanmal says that these three books were always in his hands.[3] The Qur'an is the first Arabic work of poetic prose, believed by the Muslims to be the Word of Allah as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (570-632). The *Mathnawi* is perhaps the finest work in Persian by Jalaluddin Rumi, who makes a bold use of the language of common folk and describes pantheistic

1. Mirza Qalich Beg, *Sindhi Sh'ir*, a Sindhi Sahita Society serial No. 11, Nov. 1914, p. 22.
2. *Shah Jo Risalo* (Ed. Kalyan Advani), hereafter abbreviated as *SJR* (KA), "Sur Asa", IV/24, p. 366.
3. Lilaram Watanmal, *Shah Latif*, 1889, p. 11.

ideas in his work. The *kalam* of Shah 'Abdul Karim in various forms of the Doha metre in Sindhi is mystical in character and sublime in content. These three works are mainly concerned with the nature of God and His manifestation. Like *Al-Fatiha*—the opening—of the Qur'an the, opening lines of the *Shah-Jo-Risalo* (as it has come to us in the edited form) refer to *Rububiyat* (Divine Providence), *Rahmat* (Divine Benevolence), *Adalat* (Divine Justice or Law) and *Hidayat* (Divine Guidance) and lend force to the argument in favour of the *Risalo* being considered as an embodiment of Islamic thought :

"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

"Praise is for Allah, The Lord of All Being!
The Benevolent, The Merciful !
Master on the Day of Recompense !
Thee only do we serve, and Thee only do we ask for help.
Direct us to the Straight Path—
The path of those to whom Thou has been gracious,—
Not of those who have incurred Thy displeasure,
nor of those who have gone astray."[1] (The Qur'an)

× × ×

"In the beginning Allah is,
Who knoweth All, who sits aloft,
The Lord of the World That Be,
He is the Mighty, Old of Days,
Of His Own Power Established
He is Lord, One, Only One,
Sustainer and Compassionate,
Sing ye the praise of Him Who Heals.
The True One, sing ye praise of Him.
He is the One Who hath no peer.
Confess ye this. In heart of heart
Acknowledge ye The Praised One, Who
The Causer of the Causes is.!

1. The verse translated by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif in *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an* of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Vol. I, Bombay, 1962.

Why go ye then, and bow yourselves
In front of others, why go ye ?
Men were who said: "He is The One,
Without a Peer, in heart of heart,
Acknowledging the Praised One, who
The Causer of the Causes is.
Such men did from the righteous path
Set not an erring foot astray."[1]

Shah Abdul Latif has used many a line and half a line from the Qura'n and the Hadith as *tadmin*, or quotations[2] in his Sindhi *baits*. While some of such quotations, for example, *wahdahu la sharik lahu* ('He is the One, without a peer') in the first Sur are in accordance with the Quranic teachings, the others underline the concept of the Unity of Being. Expressions from the Qur'an such as 'He, The First and The Last, and The Apparent and The Hidden', and 'Wherever you turn, you will behold the countenance of God', and 'He is nearer to you than your jugular vein', and Every moment He discloses Himself in fresh glory', and 'Everything that exists will in the end return to God' speak surely of the pantheistic theory of Unity of Being. The Quranic text of *kun* (be) and *fayakun* (it became) also underlines this theory. But those who believe in the *shari'ah* as the Muslims of the Prophet's time believed, do not read this in the Qur'an. Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad says, "......The plain fact should not be lost sight of that it will not be proper to give to those expressions (the expressions such as quoted above) any farfetched interpretations, or invest them with a meaning or significance, which the Muslims of the Prophet's time did not attach. As for the rest, the method of perception of God through illumination which has been followed by gnostics is certainly not in conflict with the principles

1. Translated by Dr. H. T. Sorley. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Kalyan", 1/1, 2, 3, p. 1.
2. Vol. II, Part I of the *Shah Latif* by Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani, 1889, deals with all such Arabic quotations in the *Shah-Jo-Risalo*.

of the Quranic concept of God. The Quranic concept is comprehensive enough to accommodate every unitary concept of God."[1]

Shah Abdul Latif's method, too, is not in clash with the broad principles of the Quranic concept. But it is not Quranic in the strict sense of the term. He, too, expresses *Ihsan*, the highest among the three grades of mind (*Islam*, *Iman*, *Ihsan*) and prays to God as if he beholds Him before him. *Islam* lies in affirming the Islamic tenets, performing the daily prayers, fasting, giving alms to the poor (*zakat*) and *Iman* in absolute conviction about the doctrinal beliefs. But he is against reciting holy maxims when the heart hides deceit:

> *Iman* or faith consists not in that you recite holy maxims
> And your heart hides deceit, duality and devil.
> *Islam* on your lips; you've idolat'ry inside.[2]

It is difficult, Shah Abdul Latif concedes, to live in the world full of deceit and yet be out of it. He advises us to live in accordance with the Law for it makes man a Perfect Man who realises God in himself, albeit He animates the whole cosmos. He says:

> Rely on the *tariqah* (Contemplation), know the *shari'ah* (the Law),
> Get your heart used to the *haqiqah* (Reality)
> and recognise the Path of *ma'rifat* (Knowledge).
> Be resolute and you'll live in the world and yet be out of it.[3]

If we try to read the purely Islamic thought in Shah Abdul Latif's work as A.K. Brohi does in his "Introduction" to the *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif* by Elsa Kazi, it will not take us far. While the above *bait* talks of the *shari'ah*, it talks

1. *The Tarjuman al-Quran*, edited and rendered into English by Syed Abdul Latif, Bombay, 1962, pp. 143-44.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Asa", IV/14, p. 365.
3. *Ibid.*, IV/40, p. 368.

also in the same breath of the *tariqah, haqiqah, ma'rifat*. A.K. Brohi says, "It is the exaggerated emphasis which is so often placed by some of the mystics on our giving up everything that ties us to the world... In the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif we do not come across any such misplaced and misdirected emphasis."[1] But we know, for instance, Sasui and Sohni of Shah Abdul Latif break all connections (*taalluq*) with the worldly things, including their relations and resources. Besides, Elsa Kazi's *Risalo* annotates the Sur Khahori in these words, "They (the wanderers in mountains) proceed to seek the 'Light', and seek it from Infinity... They are deaf to everything, want to hear the call of 'Reality'. They wear torn rags as their sign mark. They give up all for 'Lahut', i.e., 'Reality'."[2]

A.K. Brohi has one more observation to make. He says, "In fact it is by progressive assimilation of the Divine attributes that the self in us evolves and steadily acquires nearness to the Divine. The process is not one of union but of approximation—the dialogue between the 'I' and 'Thou', the *servant* and the *Master*, remains."[3] But the text in the *Risalo* says :

> "The servant too has no beginning, and no end shall see—
> Who the Beloved found, shall be absorbed for ever there."[4]

and

> "Confound thy senses, and renounce thy Self'...Him—knowing be;
> To recognise the Loved-one, drop thy personality ;
> And then coarse multiplicity with unity destroy."[5]

It is not the case of the *dew drop* swallowing the shining *Sea*, but that of the *dew drop* dropping into the shining *Sea*. Shah Abdul Latif's poetry is known for its philosophy of

---

1. Elsa Kazi, *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*, Hyderabad, 1965, p. 15.
2. *Ibid*, p. 244.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 59; (*SJR* (KA), "Sur Asa", 1/8, p. 356).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 60; (I.I. Kazi, *Risalo Shah Abdul Latif Jo*, 1961, "Sur Asa"; IV/30, p. 132).

wahdah al-wujud[1] and, therefore, the people who strive to prove it otherwise stand confounded. The learned writer, A.K. Brohi, 'playfully' admits, "Latif's poetry playfully deals with all these variegated aspects of mystical experience. He was, so it seems, a widely travelled man and had come in close contact with the Vedantist and Budhist (sic) varieties of religious beliefs and practices."[2]

A believer, like all other Sufis, in the systematic discipline and tráditional forms, Shah Abdul Latif tried to keep the *tariqah* close to the *shari'ah*[3] and very often gave expression to his usual enthusiasm and exaltation, e.g.,

> If you see rightly, you will name all objects as *Huqq*.
> O blind one! don't bring doubt in this quite clear tale.[4]

He lays emphasis on internal discipline as against external effort :

> Where the body is a rosary, the mind a bead and the heart a harp,
> There the love-strings play the song of unity.[5]

And he, like *ashab-sukr* (the 'intoxicated') among the Sufis,[6]

---

1. Cf. Allama Daudpota, "Wahdah al-wujud Jo Masailo", an article in the *Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai*, a commemoration volume issued by the Directorate of Information Pakistan, Karachi, 1953, pp. 22 et seq.
2. Elsa Kazi, *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*, p. 19.
3. See *SJR* (KA), "Sur Asa", IV/40, p. 368.
4. *Ibid.*, IV/10, p. 365.
5. *Ibid.*, IV/47, pp. 368-69.
6. Cf. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 150. "The *ashab-i-sukr*, the 'intoxicated', were different from *ashab-i-sahw*, the 'sober' ones, but when and why and in what way they became different varied in almost each individual instance. It cannot be said that they did not undergo any discipline or practice severe austerities; nor can it be said that they denied the value or necessity of sustained spiritual effort. What distinguished them primarily was an emphasis, in Christian terminology, on grace as against good works."

attaches great importance to 'grace':

> Keep on beseeching Him still more, call on His compassion.
> Despair not, His mercy is immense.[1]

After that of the Qur'an, the second major influence on Shah Abdul Latif was that of Jalaluddin Rumi's *Mathnawi*. Shah Abdul Latif is commonly called the Rumi of Sinch and he shares with him the distinction of exploring thought not in a dialectic but in its experimental facility. Rumi borrowed some of his terms and ideas from his elder contemporary Ibn al-Arabi and yet was not doctrinal. Shah Abdul Latif does the same.[2] The quality of Shah Abdul Latif's poetry also is not speculative; it is practical,—practical in the sense that it teaches love of man for man and depicts the union of the High and the Seemingly Low (Punhu and Sasui; Jam and Nuri; Mehar and Sohni; etc.). Both chant their poems in the spiritual seance, appeal to the heart more than to the head and believe that all phenomena are the individualised modes of God—The Real Being—and when illusion of individuality disappears they become one with Him.

The following propositions involved in the Sufi pantheism or monism described by Reynold A. Nicholson in his *Rumi, Poet and Mystic* serve excellently as a description of all monistic works, including the Shah Jo *Risalo* :

(a) "There is one Real Being, the Ultimate Ground of all existence. This reality may be viewed either as God (the Divine Essence) or as the World (phenomena by which the hidden Essence is made manifest).

(b) "There is no creation in Time. Divine Self-manifestation is a perpetual process. While the forms of the universe change and pass and are simultaneously renewed without a moment's intermission, in its *essence* it is co-eternal with God. There never was a time when it did not exist as a whole in His knowledge.

---

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Lila Chanesar", II/22, p. 240.
2. See, for instance. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", V/1 4 p. 411.

(c) "God is both Immanent in the sense that He appears under the aspect of limitation in all physical forms, and Transcendent in the sense that He is the Absolute Reality above and beyond every appearance.

(d) "The Divine Essence is unknowable. God makes His Nature known to us by Names and Attributes which he has revealed in the Qura'n. Though essentially identical, from our point of view the Divine Attributes are diverse and opposed to each other, and this differentiation constitutes the phenomenal world, without which we would not distinguish good from evil and come to know the Absolute Good. In the sphere of Reality there is no such thing as evil.

(e) "According to the Holy Tradition, "I created the creatures in order that I might be known," the entire content of God's Knowledge is objectified in the universe and pre-eminently in Man. The Divine Mind, which rules and animates the cosmos as in Indwelling Rational Principle, displays itself completely in the Perfect Man. Whether Prophet or Saint, the Prefect Man has realised his Oneness with God: he is the authentic image and manifestation of God and therefore the final cause of creation, since only through him does God become fully conscious of Himself."[1]

Rumi says :

"O Thou Whose Soul is free from "We" and "I", O Thou
Who art the essence of the spirit in men and women,
When men and women become one, Thou art that One,
When the units are wiped out, lo, Thou art that Unity."[2]

and Shah Abdul Latif gives the same description of mystic union in an allegorical tale of Sasui-Punhu in which the antithesis of forms—Sasui and Punhu, the subject and object of love respectively—is resolved and they become the One, the Universal Essence of Love :

As I turned inwards and conversed with my soul,
There was no mountain to surpass and no Punhu to care for;

1. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Rumi, Poet and Mystic*, 1950, pp. 23-24.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

I myself became Punhu.
Only while Sasui, did I experience grief.[1]

Sasui now is Punhu. Though separated, from our point of view, for a little while from her heavenly companion, she is finally united with Him. The reunion brings her happiness. Her woes are gone.

Plurality of things in the phenomenal world point towards the Unity. Truth is within us. An early illustration occurs in the legend of Rabi'ah al-Adawiyyah. It was spring time when her maid-servant, as we may designate her, called her from outside the house, "Come out and behold what God has made!" Rabi'ah calmly answered, "Come in and behold the Maker."

In the *Shah-Jo-Risalo*, behold Susui, herself *the* Punhu !

The fisher-maid Nuri of the Nuri-Jam Tamachi tale says in Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Kamod that she is lowly and lost. She takes herself to be the seat of demerits. But for the King Tamachi there is no such thing as demerit or evil. Nuri and Tamachi, the worldly beings, are co-eternal with God. Shah Abdul Latif says about them :

Her hands and feet, her face and form are not of the fisher-maid,
Like the chief string in a lute, she is the queen of queens.
From the very beginning her ways have been noble and fine,
The King recognised her rightly and bound the majestic bracelet on her wrist.[2]

× × ×

No one gave birth to Jam, and he gave birth to none.
He owns the young and old fisher-women as his relatives;
"He is not born and gives no birth"—No creation in time : balance unique.
Great and glorious is, Oh, the King Tamachi's timeless throne.[3]

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sasui Abri", V/2, p. 125.
2. *Ibid.*, "Sur Kamod" I/23, p. 307.
3. *Ibid.*, II/10, p. 309.

That God is both Immanent and Transcendent is brought out vividly by the Sufi poet in the following *bait* :

> An echo is The Very Call, if you explore the secret of sound.
> They both were One, but became two by 'hearing' only.[1]

For the Muslims, God is separate from and above the phenomenal world. But the *wujudi* Sufis believe that He is not different from it and He knows Himself through Man :

> 'That' is not known without 'this',
> 'this' does not stand separate from 'That';
> "Man is my secret and I am his",
> you must apprehend this.[2]

Rumi's *Mathnawi* had a deep impact on the content (but, of course, not on the form) of the *Risalo.* But Shah Abdul Karim's influence on Shah Abdul Latif was total. Not only the genealogical descent, but also the common ideological awareness and the use of poetic form Doha connect the two Sufi poets.

The doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud* became central to the *tasawwuf* after 1225, and almost all Sufis have adhered to it since then, though they at times admonish themselves to follow the *Shari'ah* strictly.

Shah Abdul Karim says :

> They for whom we yearn are none but we ourselves.
> Now, O doubt ! be gone, we recognise the Beloved.[3]

Khwaja Muhammad Zaman of Lawari, in whose *tariqah* the *Sama'* was prohibited excepting on a few occasions, says :

1. *Ibid.*, "Sur Kalyan", I/19, p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, "Sur Asa", I/7, p. 355.
3. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim-Jo-Kalam,* the *bait* No. 74, p. 217.

Friends, every spun thread is cotton; kill not Mansur,
When the phenomenal existence disappeared (before his eyes),
he talked of being himself The One.[1]

Shah Abdul Latif, the elder contemporary of Khwaja Muhammad Zaman, expresses the same thought employing a different metaphor:

One water flows through the numberless vestures of waves.[2]

and again in the Sur Sohni he says:

Mehar, Sohni and the river are One and The Same Thing.[3]

Sohni now is one with Mehar, one with God, allegorically. The term *'istighraq'* (absorption in God) defines her state. Like Mansur, she is no more *abd* (the servant), she is *Allah* herself. One who says *ana l-abd* ("I am the slave of God") supposes two existences, his own and God's, but he who says *ana l-Huqq* ("I am Truth") gives up himself and affirms the Oneness of Existence.

Shah Abdul Karim and also his predecessor Qadi Qadan (c. 1463-1551) were the *wujudis.* Allama Daudpota rightly points out that the climate in Sindh has always been favourable to the view of *wahdah al-wujud.*[4] But, the learned writer observes, Shah Abdul Karim said a *bait* or two as a *shuhudi*, or a believer in the Unity of Phenomenon, too.

During those days, Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi (1565-1624), his contemporary at Agra, tried to revive orthodoxy and he came out with a strong protest against the free thinking of

1. Dr. U.M. Daudpota (tr. & ed.), *Abyat Sindi* by Khwaja Muhammad Zaman, 1939, p. 77.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sohni", IX/3, p. 107.
3. *Ibid*, I/34, p. 83.
4. Dr. U. M. Daudpota, "Wahdah al-wujud Jo Masailo", an article in the *Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai*, a commemoration volume issued by the Directorate of Information, Pakistan, 1953, p. 22.

Akbar (1542-1605) and his courtiers. Abul Fadl and Faydi the two brothers from Sindh were the most influential writers at Akbar's court. But Shaikh Ahmad was not interested in the intellectual movement represented by them and he believed in *shari'ah* in every detail. According to him, every (so-called) truth (*haqiqah*) which was inconsistent with the *shari'ah* was heresy (*zandaq'ah*). He issued a number of pamphlets criticising the Sufis, including Ibn al-Arabi, who, to him, was a *kafir*. He could not set aside easily the force that was *wahdah al-wujud* (Unity of Existence) and therefore he declared it to be a stage in the progress towards the final stage of *wahdah al-shuhud* (Unity of Phenomenon). In other words, he placed the doctrine of Transcendence at a higher pedestal and abhorred the believers in the doctrine of Immanence. He questioned the doctrine which considers everything as God or emanating from God : How is everything God, and God everything? A shadow of a man is never a man. So, when the *wujudi* Qadi Qadan says :

> The sea strikes up in all directions
> overflowing the high and low land ;
> Parts merge into the whole.
> it is all Oneness.[1]

Shah Abdul Karim joins issue with him and says :

> The sea does not destroy the directions
> or overflow the high and low land;
> It's not that all ceases to be, except the One.
> Each being lives on in Him.[2]

To explain Shah Abdul Karim's above *bait* the *shuhudis* will take an example of the green grass, which if flooded by the overflowing sea still stays inside it, though not visible to our eye. They understand the term *fana* in the sense that

1. Momon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim-Jo-Kalam*, the *bait* No. 6 by Qadi Qadan, p. 221.
2. *Ibid*, the *bait* No. 71, p. 217.

a lover "swallows" the Divine Light and still remains a lover. He does not drop into or merge in it. But this forced sense of the word *fana* or uneasy alliance of *wahdah al-wujud* and *wahdah al-shuhud*, as Shaikh Ahmad or others of the creed try to bring forth, does not yield an organic relationship between the two.

Shah Abdul Karim sings :

> Mistake not the speech
> of animals, insects and birds as their own speech;
> By Allah, this tumult and sound is of the Beloved Himself.[1]

Shah Abdul Karim's *Risalo* is the able expression of *wahdah al-wujud* in Sindhi. Shah Abdul Latif's poetry too is the sensuous translation of this belief in the language of the Sindhi masses. His *baits*, for example, Nos. 15, 16, 17 (*SJR* (KA), "Sur Kalyan"/I), No. 23 ("Sur Ramkali"/IV) and No. 11 (in both the "Dastans" III and IV, "Sur Asa") may be read side by side with Shah Abdul Karim's *baits* Nos. 5, 73, 33, 22, 81 and 83 respecetively. Shah Abdul Latif's contemporaries Shah Inat (c. 1623-1712) and Sachal (1739-1827) spoke literally the similar language in many of their *baits* and metaphorically the same in all. Shah Inat paved the way for Shah Abdul Latif, and Shah Abdul Latif did so for Sachal. Shah Inat brought powerful idiom and fresh imagery to the Sindhi poetry and Sachal infused 'the intoxication of Mansur' in it. The Sindhi Muslim poets have expressed their mystical ideas not very differently from the philosophical thought of the Hindu ones and therefore the Hindus have been their ardent admirers. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel says, "In Sindh, the borders between Hinduism and Islam were not hermetically closed, and the biographical works about the Sufis of Sindh contain also several names of Hindus who became attached to a Muslim Shaikh—and the first thorough studies of Sindhi mysticism have been made by Hindus. A classical example of this close

1. *Ibid*., the *bait* No. 5, p. 207.

connection is the "Sur Ramkali" in Shah Abdul Latif's *Risalo*, a poem in which this mystic praises the wandering yogis in terms taken from the Qur'an and the Hadith. Sachal Sarmast and his followers have not hesitated to sing the essential Unity of Being that manifests itself in Abu Hanifa, now in Hanuman, now in the Vedas, now in the Qur'an."[1]

Sufism in Sindh was at no time regarded as an extraneous element for it was more native in its character than the Islamic orthodoxy. Once Shah Abdul Karim was asked the meaning of the *kalima*. He replied, "One, who takes the seller, the buyer and the ware to be one and the same thing, will know its meaning."[2] The literal meaning ("the Divine Being is solely Allah and there being no God except Him") gives way to the non-literal and the non-dualistic significance which is easily acceptable to the people born and brought up with the views of "unity in diversity" and "Unity of Being".

The doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud* never gives rise to theocratic basis of any state or ethnic superiority of any race or discrimination between two individuals on any ground.[3] Shah Abdul Karim says, "The desert-sand appears as the mirage-water from a distance. This world, too, is like that mirage-water. What the people take to be an object is in reality He Himself."[4] Sankara said in his *Brahma Sutra Bhasya*, "Just as pot-ether, basin-ether, etc , are not different from ether-at-large, and just as the mirage water, etc., are not different from the desert-sand, etc., because they are of the nature of what appear and are subsequently sublated and because their nature cannot be defined, even so the aggregate called the

1. Annemarie Schimmel, "Shah Inayat Shahid of Jhok", a paper in the *Liber Amicorum*, Leiden, 1969, p. 168.
2. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim-Jo-Kalom*, the *malfuzat* section, p. 100.
3. Cp. G.M. Sayid, *Paigham-e-Latif*, p. 49.
4. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim-Jo-Kalam*, the *malfuzat* section, p. 129.

world, consisting of objects of enjoyment and enjoyers, has no existence apart from *Brahman*."[1]

Advaita and *wahdah al-wujud*, though two different names, refer, in their conception of God, to one and the same view: He is the one in all of us. And the mystery of this permeation is the Universe out of Himself. Shah Abdul Latif says:

"From One, many to being came;
'many' but Oneness is;
Don't get confounded, Reality
is 'One', this truth don't miss—
Commotions' vast display—all this
I vow, of Loved-one is".[2]

In the Mainstream of Indian Thought

Tasawwuf or Sufism, as we have seen, has its origin in the experience and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad himself. In the state of *uruj*, he was a different person. He was the Person at that time and what he uttered then was from God Himself. The other state of *nuzul* brought him a sense of separation from God and was mainly responsible for his teachings enshrined in the Hadith.[3] Besides, two more influences of Neo-Platonism and Indian thought have been the leading elements of Tasawwuf. The first showed itself through the Greek philosophy, Gnosticism and Christian teachings, and the other came from the monistic Vedanta. The two waters of Neoplatonism and Indian thought found in Tasawwuf a soil, already the seed-bed of mystic devotion.

That both the philosophies deeply influenced the Sufi thought shows that they both were not much different from

---

1. Sankara, *Brahma Sutra Bhasya*, II, i, 14; translated by T.M.P. Mahadevan in his *Shankaracharya*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 95.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Kalyan". I/15, p. 3. Translated by Elsa Kazi. *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif* (Selections), Hyderabad, 1965, p. 32.
3. Cf. Mirza Qalich Beg, *Ahwal Shah Bhitai-a Jo*, p. 35.

each other and were also capable of developing its seeds. Plotinus (205-270), the founder of Neoplatonic school held the same belief about the existence of God as the Upanisads had held long before him. The same old doctrine holds it possible for the human soul to find God, to see Him and to be one with Him.

On the basis of spread of the Buddha's teachings, recorded as these are in the 11 century in East Iran, etc., and existence of many Buddha *viharas* in *Balkh* where the Sufis lived in a large number, some scholars believe that the Indian thought reached the Sufis through Budhhism.[1] But Buddhism, only as a highly developed technique of mind concentration and as an elaborate code of morals, seems to have significantly influenced the early Tasawwuf. In its fundamental metaphysical nature, Buddhism differs very widely from the Upanisadic and Sufistic thought. The Vedic and Sufistic thought consists in accepting the *atman* or *ruh* as the permanent substantial entity, while the Buddhistic teaching in denying it, as it (the *atman* or *ruh*) is, according to the Buddha, the root-cause of all attachment. Furthermore, the Vedantins and Sufis regard the *atman* or *ruh* as an unchanging eternal soul, while the Buddhists think that this view would induce inaction or *akriyavada* in life. T.R.V. Murti says, "An unchanging eternal soul, as impervious to change, would render spiritual life lose all meaning; we would in that case be neither the better nor the worse for our efforts."[2] Now, let us examine this view.

Atman or *ruh*, if taken literally, is something to which we become attached. But according to the Upanisads and Sufi works, the *atman* or *ruh* is *Brahman* or *Huqq*, there is nothing

1. For the Buddhist influence on Tasawwuf, see *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, and Nicholson's works.
2. T.R.V, Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 17.

besides it and on attaining Realisation no attachment afflicts it. Here exists a tree whose roots have gone upwards. This is *Brahman* or *Huqq*, the never-dying. The universe is in Him. Nothing is outside of Him.[1] Shah Abdul Latif also says :

> Sufi lives in all, as one ether pervades all bodies.[2]

or

> Look within, the Friend abides in you.[3]

How can selfishness, desire or attachment remain in one who believes in the unreality of earthly life ? The Vedantic conception embodied in the three syllables of Prajapati spoken to his three-fold off-springs—gods, men and *asuras*—"Da Da Da", *Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata* (i.e., give, sympathise and control)[4] emphasises the three cardinal virtues of charity, compassion and self-restraint leading the human soul to the Realisation of the One. We may experience the joy of giving as also the resultant freedom from want in Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Sorath.

One day, a minstrel, Bijal by name, comes to the King Diyach—a minstrel with his lyre[5]. He asks for his head. Diyach gives it to him most willingly. Beneficence brings him release from the human bondage :

> Now the three were reconciled—the strings, the dagger and the neck.
> The King said, "Nothing is lovelier
> than your coming all the way for my head.
> I give it to you, I thank God for that."[6]

---

1. Taittiriya Upanisad, 1-10.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Yaman Kalyan", V/2, p. 23.
3. *Ibid.*, "Sur Sasui Abri", III/9, p. 121.
4. *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* : 5-2.
5. Cf. "The true monk takes nothing with him but his lyre": *Varieties of Religious Experience* (W. James), pp. 266-67.
6. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sorath", IV/10, p. 324.

Jakhro of Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Bilawal is a man of compassion who gives water to the thirsty and feeds the hungry. He is merciful like the heavenly rains. The Sufi poet sings the glory of compassion in his Sur Sarang also. In this Sur, the hoardersand profiteers are admonished for their greed; and the clouds of mercy go to Istanbul, to Rum, and, in fact, all over the world. They go everywhere and remind us of the one other rumble of the Thunder—*Da* (*Dayadhvam* or symathise) :

"To western parts they took their way;
They flashed and flickered in Cathay.
Sarmarkand they lighted of their kindly memory full.
They fared to Rum and Kabul: and they reached Kandhar:
O'er Delhi roared a thunder rain,
And boomed above the Deccan plain
And cast their living light-bolts out and over the Girnar.
They went aside and changed a course to verge on Jaisalmir;
On Bhuj a heavy drenching showered,
On Dhat a gentle rain they poured
And gladdened into happiness the folks of Bikanir.
To Umarkot they darted, there to flood the grassy meads,
On my Sind aye shed water, Lord,
And plenty, Mercy's Self, accord.
Make this whole world to burgeon with Thy grace of rainy deeds."

In the *Geeta*, Krisna teaches Arjuna how to control the senses :

"That gives itself to hollow shows of sense
Seeth its helm of wisdom rent away,
And like a ship in waves of whirlwind, drives
To wreck and death. Only with him, great Prince,
Whose senses are not swayed by things of sense—
Only with him who holds his mastery,
Shows wisdom perfect."[2]

---

1. *Ibid.*, "Sur Sarang", IV/12, p. 351. Translated by Dr. H.T Sorley.
2. Arnold Edward, *The Song Celestial*, II/67-68.

The ship or boat of life is steered clear of the strong whirlwind of senses with the help of control over oneself. The same symbol of boat is there in Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Sriraga :

> It's an awful state, O boatman, shun your sleep.
> The shore is gripped in a wrilpool as curd in a churning pot,
> Control yourself and sleep not.[1]

A soul cannot hope of being one with the Prime Soul unless it has divested itself of the temptation of material things. Lila of Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Lila-Chanesar loses control over her senses and is tempted by diamonds. She swerves from the path of self-restraint and degrades herself. Like an accursed widow, the Queen is now estranged from the King. She remembers with nostalgia the glorious days with her husband:

> I was in an exalted state in Chanesar's kingdom,
> And the beat on drums would announce me wherever I went.
> He has cast me off and I am the lowest in the land now.[2]

As regards the reading of inaction in the Vedanta philosophy, suffice it to say that all the three canons of Vedanta, *viz.*, the principal *Upanisads*, the *Bhagavad-geeta* and the *Brahma Sutra* insist on the necessity of action—the action, which is disinterested and desireless (*Niskama Karma*). They synthesise both the *Pravritti* and *Nivritti*—the active way of life and the life of renunciation. They teach renunciation *in* action and not that *of* action. By "renunciation in action" it is meant that we should do our actions and never be attached with their fruit. In the *Bhagvad-geeta* (iii/1-2), Krishna removes Arjuna's doubt about the necessity or otherwise of doing action and emphasises the importance of action without any desire for reward. Shah Abdul Latif's following lines echo the same idea of renouncing our actions to the will of God :

---

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sriraga", III/20, p. 58.
2. *Ibid.*, "Sur Lila Chanesar", II/8, p. 238.

Surrender all actions to God, the Almighty,
Exercise dependence upon Him
having removed your doubt and anxiety.
He Himself will fulfil your desire by His grace.[1]

Here, the most comprehensive vision of spirituality is achieved by the oriental view of *anguraha* or *karam* juxtaposed with the Christian view of *grace*, and also by the doctrine of desireless action related to that of *tawakkul* of the Sufi *tariqah*. Al-Ghazali envisages *action* in *tawakkul*, when he says, "Know that *tawakkul* is a sort of faith (*iman*), and faith is made up of knowledge (*ilm*), state (*hal*) and action or practice (*amal*); so too is *tawakkul*".[2] Sasui, in Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Husaini, is determined to find her lover Punhu of Kech regardless of the 'stone-hearted' mountains obstructing her way. She says to herself, "As long as you live, you fare forward. There is no time to waste in inaction."[3] She knows it well that Punhu's camelcade is miles ahead of her and she will not find its track after sunset. The sun is about to set. But she does not give up her action:

When people told her, "Far, far away is Kech",
She moved at a faster pace, mindful only of her Lord.[4]

In the Sur Kapaiti, too, the Sufi poet advises us to spin on, toil on, as long as we can, and look for no reward in return. The reward will come to us by His grace, and our yarn, though there be many lumps in it, will be accepted by Him for we always keep working.

Buddhism sees in the teachings of Vedanta the 'form' and not the 'spirit' of *vairagya*, when it talks of *inaction* or *akriyavada* induced by the unchanging nature of *atman* or

1. *Ibid*., "Sur Sriraga", IV/2, p. 60. Cp. the *Geeta*, XVIII/66.
2. *Ihya u l Ulum*; Cairo, Ed. 1346 A. H., Vol. IV, pp. 211-15.
3. Cf. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Husaini", II/17, p. 204.
4. *Ibid*., XI/7, pp. 225-26.

ruh. Its denial of *atman* or *ruh* runs contrary to the ideas of Vedanta and/or Sufism. It seems that much exaggerated emphasis is laid on the Buddhist influence on Sufism. On the other hand, both Vedanta and Sufism identify self with God, and the state of bliss into which the Vedantins and Sufis aspire to enter after the physical death is called *moksa* and *fana fil lah wa baqa bi l lah* respectively—a state of merger in God and release of individual soul from the bondage of sensual existence, a state in which self is not annihilated any more than wave of the sea is lost in the sea.

The first basic propositions of Vedanta were expounded by Badarayana's *Vedanta Sutra* (3rd and 4th century A.D.). Various commentaries on this work and on the *Upanisads* further developed Vedanta. Its major trend—the doctrine o *advaita* (absolute non-dualism)—was set off by Sankara in the 8th century. According to him, Brahman is omniscient, omnipotent and the cause of the organisation, sustentation and resolution of the world.[1] The world contains no other reality except Brahman or the Absolute Spirit; everything except the Absolute is an illusion (*maya*); the so-called individual soul is the Absolute itself, and no other. Consciousness or Soul (Brahman) admits of no limitation and denomination and is the Boundless Reality. It admits of limitation only with reference to something which is not consciousness. When related to a body or a mind, it is called an individual. The unrelated and unalloyed Consciousness is one of which individuals are only appearances. Every individuality is this One Consciousness, fundamentally. There is no duality. Duality is fiction, non-duality or not-two-ness is reality. Shah Abdul Latif also says :

> Damn the two, go to the One.
> He tolerates not even a single difference,
> And you, O squint-eyed! talk of the three.[2]

1. Cp. the opening lines of the *Risalo*.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Kohiyari", VI/8, p. 198.

The Vedantic teaching has for support the removal of difference posited by nescience (*avidya*). It expounds Brahman as the Inner Self, as the non-object, and thus removes the difference consisting in (i) the object of knowledge, (ii) the knowing subject, and (iii) the knowledge process, which is a projection of nescience.[1]

The external realities or ojects also have existence. But that is an unreal one. The world is only an unreal appearance in *Brahman*, even as snake is in the rope.[2] There are *dvirupa*, two forms of *Brahman*: *Brahman* As-It-Is-In-Itself, and *Brahman* as in relation to the world. The former is *Brahman* unconditioned by *maya*, the latter is *Brahman* conditioned by it and, therefore, an assumed duality or unreality. Here Sankara reasons out that there are levels of knowledge and experience. Objects appearing in a dream are known to be unreal when the dream is over. Likewise, the 'variety of objects' of the waking life becomes unreal when nescience or lack of knowledge in the waking life is overcome by the Real Awakening or Realisation.[3] The following two *baits* will illustrate Sankara's view. Shah Abdul Karim says :

> O friend! all dreams are unsubstantial,
> no one should trust a dream;
> Asleep, we were together; when I woke up,
> he was no longer there.[4]

When Sasui was dreaming, Punhu was with her. When she got up, she found that he had been driven miles away from her. But that is not the Real Awakening. She gains It at last,

---

1. Sankara, *Brahma Sutra Bhasya*, I, i, 4, tr. by. T. M. P. Mahadevan in his *Shankaracharya*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 77.
2. Cp. The *Avidya* section in *Sami-a-Ja Chunda, Sloka*, ed. B.H. Nagrani, New Delhi, 1963, pp. 10, 15.
3. Sankara, *Mandukya-Karika Bhasya*, II, 4.
4. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim-Jo-Kalam*, the *bait* No. 66, p. 216; Cp. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Desi", VI/15, p. 181.

and says in Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Sasui Abri :

> As I turned inwards and conversed with my soul,
> There was no mountain to surpass and no Punhu to care for;
> I myself became Punhu...
> only while Sasui, did I experience grief.[1]
>
> x x x
>
> I was misled by *waham* or *maya*; or else, I was Punhu myself—[2]

Sasui now is in a state where Kech (Punhu's native place) and Bhambhor (her own place) are reconciled in the One Original Abode and where she feels complete non-attachment with her worldly relatives.[3] Realisatian is possible only by becoming one with the object of realisation, by becoming what one would like to become. In that case knowledge will not be of the form, "I know this", but "I am this". Realisation is an intimate knowledge in the form, "I am *Brahman*" or "I am *Huqq*", and then there is no transmigration as before. The doctrine of transmigration of soul or reincarnation which has been alien to Islam was soon adopted by Indian Sufism and was afterwards added to by the theory of *karma*.[4] If one living here does not know the self, then there is for him or her endless misery in the form of birth, old age, death, etc. One who 'dies' before death, who while living gives no consideration to body, lives eternally in him. Shah Abdul Latif also says:

> "Who die before death, never will destroyed by dying be.—
> Who live ere second life they see will live eternally."[5]

A person, who has attained the Realisation, never ceases to be what he Really Is. In other words, he never ceases to be the

1 *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sasui Abri", V/2, p. 125.
2. *Ibid.*, V/8, p. 126.
3. Cf. *Ibid.*, "Sur Desi", V/18, p. 176.
4. Cf. *Qanun-i-Ishaq*, Vol. I, *Kafis* Nos. 2 and 37.
5. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Madhuri", IV/7, p. 154, translated by Elsa Kazi, *Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif*, Hyderabad Sindh, 1965, p. 132.

One, though he is in his individual form. An ordinary earthly existence is but a sleep and a forgetting.[1] When a person is really aware of it, he has a negative gain in the sense that he has removed the wrong notion about himself. In Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Mumal Rano, Mumal, Rano's wife, under a spell of ignorance, sleeps during her husband's absence with her sister, clad in man's (Rano's) attires, and thus satisfies her desire of being with him. Rano comes to her palace and goes back. Mumal comes to know of this and weeps drops of blood for him. Now her eyes know no sleep and her being knows no forgetting. And her mind does not get distracted by the worldly objects. Her mind becomes still like the flame of a lamp by which she waits for the True Self in whom she yearns to be merged[2]:

> The whole night my lamp did burn; the dawn burst in rays now.
> O Rana, come back to me; I shall die without you.
> I've despatched all the crows of Kak as messeagers to you.[3]

Mumal receives a message that Rano will come to her at the dawn (the Awakening!). Then there are for her no distinctions of forms, classes or castes, etc.

> A message new and great from Rano was received last night;
> We received a divine gift from the Giver Himself—
> Ask not for caste; whoever comes, he is welcome.[4]

---

1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Immortality Ode*, "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting—"
2. Cf. Sankara, *Mandukya-Karika Bhasya*, iii, 46, trauslated by T.M.P. Mahedevan in his *Shankaracharya*. p. 113, "When the mind brought under control does not get resolved in sleep nor again get dissipated among objects, when it becomes still like the flame of a lamp kept in a windless place, when it does not appear in the form of any imagined object, when the mind is of such nature, then it merges in the form of *Brahman*."
3. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Mumal Rano", IV/I, p. 252.
4. *Ibid.*, IX/5, p. 266.
   Cf. Sankara, *Atmabodh*, 40: "Having given up all, viz., form,

Liberation, which is another name for Realisation, comes to Mumal now. She is free from the bondage of body and mind. It is a stage that does not admit of any distinction. She sees everything in herself, and herself in everything. She is the entire world, and the entire world is she:

> Whither need I drive the camel? All around is His glory;
> Kak is within me and also the gardens here.
> There is nothing but peace, nothing but Rano everywhere.[1]

Mumal achieves the union, or the immensity of life, which is without beginning or end. Shah Abdul Latif's Marui lives right from her early age in this immense reality, which the Chieftain Umar's offers of fine clothes and delicious victuals cannot shatter. She says:

> Before God created universe, saying: "Be",
> And we were not yet separated from Him,
> my relationship began there and then;
> O my Beloved, I still hold this cognition in me.[2]

Marui is aware of *Turiya*, Truth, in her life. Even as the thirst for silver does not remain when nacre is known, she never feels any desire for the non-self (clothes, food and other material things) when the Self is cognised by her. At last Lila kills her desire for the diamond-necklace; Mumal, too, gives up the attachment with her 'person', cognises Rano in herself and thus realises *Turiya*, Truth, or *Shantih*, the Peace That Passeth Understanding. The Truth Beyond cannot be described:

> Whoever saw Truth, he spoke nothing;
> he realised Peace.[3]

---

caste, etc., the one who has realised the Supreme Truth remains as of the nature of the plenary consciousness—bliss." (Translated by T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Shankaracharya*, p. 112).

1. *SJR* (KA), IX/7, p. 266.
2. *Ibid.*, "Sur Marui", I/3, p. 269.
3. *Ibid.*, "Sur Yaman Kalyan", V/14, p. 24.

It is not for nothing that the last *bait* of the Sur Mumal Rano (quoted last but two above) closes with the words :

> There is nothing but peace, nothing but Rano everywhere...

like the formal ending of the Upanisad: *Shantih Shantih Shantih*. Nature of the Absolute is undefinable and, therefore, the Upanisads refer to it as 'not this, not this, (*neti neti*). To define a thing is to limit it. The unlimited cannot be limited in terms of categories. Sankara does not even categorise the Absolute in numbers: He does not say; it is the One: he calls his philosophy *advaita*, the philosophy of the not-two, non-dualism.

This, however, does not mean that the Absolute is a nothingness, or a contentless void. Instead, It is, as stated earlier, the Peace That Passeth Understanding. This is what is meant by *Nahi* or *'Adam* or *Sunj* (Nothingness) in Shah Abdul Latif's Sur Ramkali. It is the experience of Peace, inexpressible and indescribable :

> The *yogis* became the Whole, their only concern;
> Whose seat is in Nothingness, I cannot live without them.[1]
>
> x x x
>
> Where there is no heaven and no trace of earth,
> Where the moon and the sun neither rise, nor descend,
> That far the *yogis* have set their tryst with the Supreme Knowledge, and they see the Lord in Nothingness.[2]

The stage described in the *bait* given above is the same as that in the Kathopanisad: "Where neither sun nor moon, nor stars shine, nor does lightning strike". Shah Abdul Latif craves and longs for the *yogis*, the human beings in whom inhere the divine qualities, and with whom he travelled far and wide in our country.

---

1. *Ibid.*, "Sur Ramkali", I/41, p. 399.
2. *Ibid.*, IX/55, p. 427.

He says :

> The *yogis* pack their bags with hunger
> and prepare themselves for *ananda*,
> They desire not for the food,
> and lustily pour the 'thirst' in their cups and sip it,
> They flog their minds
> until they be like beaten flax.
> Thus, they wade through the wasteland
> and at last get close to regeneration and fertility.[1]

In another *bait* of the same Sur, the Sufi poet says :

> Take advantage of their presence,
> be with them and enrich your experience.
> Soon they'll go a journey to the thought-of distant land,
> leave this world of pleasures and reach the holy Ganga.[2]

It is a wasteland on which we live, and Shah Abdul Latif alludes to the Ganga in the above-quoted *bait*. According to a Puranic myth, the sacred Ganga waters emanate from the matted locks of the Lord Siva's head and fertilise the barren land. The Ganga stands for the soul's regeneration through divine ecstasy.

The Sur Ramkali makes it clear that a part of Shah Abdul Latif's heritage is derived from the tradition of the Nath Yogis. But, of course, the poet did not favour mere physical Practice of the yogic exercises (*sadhana*) without real spiritual attunement (*bhakti*). As such, there is no reference in his poetry to the entire method of penance as practised by the Nath-panthis. His is the *bhavatmak rahasyavada* (mysticism with emotion or devotion at the basis) and not the *sadhanatmak* one (mysticism based on the yogic exercises). His *yogis* are the spiritual people, far away from the physical pleasures. They

1. *Ibid.*, IX/I, p. 422.
2. *Ibid.*, VIII/4, p. 419.

hear the subtle sound pervading the Universe, the unstruck sound or the *Anahata Nada* :

> They wear loin-cloth, and need no ablutions,
> They hear the subtle call that sounded before the advent of Islam,
> They sever all ties and meet their guide, Gorakhnath.[1]

The *Anahata Nada, or Sabda,* in its ultimate sense is the same highest symbol *Om* of the Upanisads. The *Mula Mantra* of the *Jap-Ji* by Guru Nanak, who is popularly described as a Guru of the Hindus and a Pir of the Muslims, opens with this highest mystic syllable, "Ek Omkar Sat-Nam, Karta, Purkha......" Shah Abdul Latif also says :

> Constantly contemplate on this Word, the cure of your misery,
> Keep *meem* in your mind and put *alif* before it.[2]

The reference here is to both the sacred sound *Om* (*Om* when written in the Arabic script begins with the letter *alif* and ends with *meem*) and Muhammad-after-Allah (*meem* for Muhammad and *alif* for Allah). Shah Abdul Latif had remained in the company of wandering Jogis, believing in the unity of being. Sankara's *advaita* and the Sufis' *wadah al-wujud* are strikingly similar in their metaphysical quest.

That the poet is deeply influenced by the Indian mystic method is evident also from the fact that he, unlike the Islamic mystics, describes himself (or for that matter the seeker) in the role of a female lover and depicts God as the Man (*Purus*). Kabir says, "Rama is my Husband, I am His little bride."[3] Mallik Muhammad Jayasi describes himself in the role of a male lover and depicts the Beloved God as a woman. Like Kabir and unlike Jayasi, Shah Abdul Latif becomes Sasui,

---

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", VII/15, p. 417.
2. *Ibid.*, "Sur Yaman Kalyan", V/28, p. 25.
   Cp. Krishna Kripalani, *Faith and Frivolity*, New Delhi, 1962, p. 64.
3. '*Rama mere piya, maen Rama ki bahuria.*'

Mumal, Nuri, Sohni, Lila, Marui and Sorath, feels the pangs of separation, seeks the union with God and is finally united with Him. This explains why the Sufi poet has not thought of describing the beauty of his heroines. It is Punhu, Rano, Tamachi, Mehar, Chanesar, Khetsen and Diyach who are the very images of beauty in his poetry. Sohni tells her friends :

> If you were to see Mehar's face but once,
> You would no longer sleep comfortably beside your husbands,
> And would not wait to pick up earthen jars as an aid to swim,
> But plunge in the river long before me.[1]

Again like Kabir, he refers to Rama[2] as Impersonal God (*Nirguna*). The allusion to Rama in Shah Abdul Latif's poetry is not like the description of Rama in Tulasidasa's *Rama-Charitra Manasa* in which God is contemplated and envisioned as personal God (*Saguna*).

Religion of the Sufi poet even as of his other contemporary poets all over India was essentially of a man in direct relationship with God and not of a particular religious group looking towards the scriptural instructions and injunctions. As is abundantly evident from his poetry, he did not hold the traditional view of forming a part of any particular religious community.

---

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sohni", I/5, p. 79.
2. Cf. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", II/7, p. 401; VI/2, 3, 9, 11, pp. 413-14,

Qazi Qadan

Once more, however, these scholarly debates may be left aside. Instead, let us look at the ordinary world, which some philosophers have called the *Lebenswelt*, or "life-world", within which we carry on our "normal" activities in collaboration with other men. This is the arena of most of our projects in life, whose reality is strongest and thus the most "natural" in our consciousness. This in the words of the social philosopher Alfred Schutz, is "the world of daily life which the wide-awake, grown-up man who acts in it and upon it amidst his fellowmen experiences within the natural attitude as a reality." It is to this domain of taken-for-granted, "natural" experience that religion posits a "supernatural" reality.

Peter L. Berger,
A Rumour of Angels, 1969

This prefatory quote provides a sure solid ground to take off to the mystical domain of Sindhi poetry by Qazi Qadan (1463-1551) At the time when the Indian sub-continental Sufism is looked at from a purely Islamic point of view in some scholarly debates, the debates not unlike others undertaken in the past to Islamicise it, the extract helps us to view the Sindhi Sufi poetry (for that matter, any religious—mystic or secular—poetry) in its "reality" grounded in the common, day-to-day experience of the people themselves. A people or a society is held together by its individuals in their collective consciousness, or collective conscience; as manifest in a particular set of moral and social ideas. The individuals who represent their society in its inborn, natural attitudes on life, or

sometimes in their original thought constructs—original yet well-intergated into the life-experience of the people around—are great; all others go to make such greatness. Qazi Qadan was one such great man of his times, in Sindh.

The first-ever historical reference to him was made by Mir Muhammad Ma'sumi, a chronicler, in his *Tarikh-i Ma'sumi* written in Persian in 1600[1], when he (Ma'sumi) was about 65 years old. Besides being a younger contemporary to him, he belonged to the same place Bakhar in Sindh, to which Qazi Qadan belonged. In his *Tarikh,* he does not talk of Qazi Qadan as a poet; he describes him as a Qazi, a religio-political personage. At one place he says, "Qazi Qadan ibn Qazi Sa'id ibn Zainud-Din Bakhari was famous for his piety, continence and knowledge of *tafsir*, *Hadith* and *tasawwuf* (Sufism). He became a disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri (d. 1505). He was appointed Qazi of Bakhar and the adjoining places by Mirza Shah Husain and exhibited an astute sense of justice tempered with compassion in deciding the disputes relating to *shari'ah.* His unshakable faith in Sayyid Muhammad Jaunpuri brought on his head the criticism of the Ulama of the day... He continued to hold the post of Qazi to a ripe old age when he resigned. The year 958/1551 saw his death."[2]

After five or ten years (because the dates are not precisely established), we come across another reference to Qazi Qadan in Maulvi Muhammad Ghausi's *Gulzar-i Abrar*, a book (also in Persian) containing biographical notices of the celebrated Muslim saints and Sufis. The book was composed between 1605

1. H,M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *The History of Indi as told by its own historians. London* (1867), reprinted Allahabad (year ?) Vol. I, P 213
2. *Tarikh-i Ma'sumi* Sindhi translation, p. 243.

nP 1610. Its Urdu translation appeared by the title of *Azkar-i Abrar*, the accounts of the pious, from Ujjain Malwa in 1911. This work *Gulzar-i Abrar*, and not the later work *Bayan al-Arifin* written in 1630, was the first work which referred to Qazi Qadan as a poet. The *Qazi Qadan Jo Kalam*, ed. Hiro Thakur, hereafter abbreviated as *QQJK*, in its pp. 55-6 wrongly observes, it was the *Bayan al-Arifin*; obviously, the QQJK is not conversant with the *Gulzar-i Abrar*, or its Urdu translation *Azkar-i Abrar*. The *Gulzar-i Abrar* says about Qazi Qadan, "After accomplishing his formal education, he lost interest in it. He sought to solve the problematic of material world through change in moral outlook. He succeeded in this by overcoming his *nafs* (desire) and gained insight in the reality of things. Here are some of his sayings constituting the essence of his teachings which he put into verse in his native tongue Sindhi : (I) The study of the Prophetic Tradition, Hanifi Law and Arabic Grammar never brought to my mind the aroma of gnosis ; what I sought I found beyond this world. (II) All languages negate You (O God!) by the word "la", but You are out to prove Yourself. III) What does "la" negate, when nothing exists except Truth ? (IV) If we consider deeply, then the One we seek is we ourselves. He has written more things of this kind than can be described here. But the beauty of every piece comes out in the style peculiar to the language in which it is written. A translation cannot retain the beauty of the original. Shaikh Ibrahim Sindhi whose tomb is to the north of Burhanpur was one of his devoted associates."[1]

Mian Muhammad Raza *alias* Mir Daryai Thattawi's *Bayan al-Arifin* (written in 1630) makes a mention of the fact that Qazi Qadan lived for a brief time at Dar Bela (now Dabhro) in Bakhar and there he came into contact with a *faqir* who drew him to the path of *haqiqah* (the Supreme Reality) The work also contains Qazi Qadan's seven *baits* alongwith.

1. *Azkar-i Abrar*, the Urdu translation of the *Gulzar-i Abrar*, p. 27.

those by Shah Abdul Karim.

The later work *Tuhfat al-Kiram* (written in 1767-68) throws light on Qazi Qadan, his predecessors and sucessors and affords us an important insight into his family tradition. It places his great-great grandfather Qazi Abu'alKhair among the grand old men of Uch, a great seat of Sufi learning in the medieval Sindh. He along with his family moved to Bakhar, where he died. Thereafter, Qazi Qadan's forefathers came to be known as *Bakhari*, or of Bakhar. Since they lived also at Thatta and Sewhan, they sometimes are called Thattawi and Sivastani. Qazi Qadan's daughter Bibi Fatima, a *Rabi'a* of her time, knew the whole of Qur'an by heart. Her son (Qazi Qadan's grandson) Mian Mir of Lahore was Dara Shikoh's preceptor.[1]

All the present-day descriptions of Qazi Qadan and his great poetry rest on such source books as mentioned above and also on the internal evidence obtained from his works. The individual scholarly readings of the two evidences—external and internal—partly explain some variance in these descriptions. For instance, the historical fact that Qazi Qadan, whom Jam Nando, the Samma ruler of Sindh, had appointed as Qazi and also the keeper of the Bakhar fort, failed to defend the fort against the invading army of Shah Beg (the Arghun Amir of Qandhar who had been defeated by Babur in his homeland in 1517) and quietly (or, peacefully) gave away the keys of the fort to Shah Beg in order to save the people from the possible bloodshed[2] has been interpreted as an act of treason against one's own country[3]. One may look at this historical event from another

1. *Tuhfat al Kiram*, Sindhi translation from the Persian original, pp. 320 and 353.
2. *Tabqat-i Akbari*, vol. 3, p. 517.
3. Dr. Mumtaz Pathan, "Sindhi Shari-a Ja Banikar-1 (Qazi Qadan.", an article in the *M* 1977 Joint No. 1-2, p. 182.

point of view : Qazi Qadan loved his people and did not send them to the altar of slaughter by the alien sword, he stood for non-violence in the best tradition of the land (here it may be recalled, the Arabs also had the initial victory over Sindh in 712 owing to this attitude on the part of some Buddhist Governors of the Sindhian forts)[1]. For that purpose, one may have a closer look at the great role played by Qazi Qadan during the days Thatta was in the siege laid by Shah Beg in 1520, and Jam Firuz, successor to Jam Nando, fled from Thatta, helplessly. The *Tarkhan Nama* (written in 1654-55) describes it copiously: "Thatta was given up to plunder till the 20th of the month (December, 1520), in the course of which the inhabitants were treated with merciless severity and many of them were carried into captivity. The holy text, "surely when kings enter a village they destroy it," was fully exemplified in this instance. At last, at the strenuous exertions of Qazi Qadan, a most distinguished scholar (who had by that time left Bakhar and come to live in Thatta), these outrages were put an end to, proclamation was made to the effect that the people of the city were to remain undisturbed"[2] (the observation in the bracket mine).

Thus we see, Qazi Qadan was an influential man of his times. Though a Qazi, a dispenser of the Islamic law, in the beginning, he rose to be a great Sufi. The fast-changing political scene in Sindh—the transfer of power from the native Samma rulers Jam Nando and Jam Firuz to the alien Arghun Amirs Shah Beg and Mirza Shah Husain during his life-time—changed his outlook on life a great deal. The cruel ways of the world made him look "beyond the world" and turned him, an Islamic scholar, into a Sufi poet. A man of justice

1. In this connection, Maulana Ghulam Qasimi's editorial in the *Mehran*—1979/ No. 2 on the life-experience of a particular land, in the present case, of Sindh, is eminently perceptive.
2. H.M. Elliot & J. Dowson, *The History of India as told by its own historians*, pp. 309-10.

(*adal*), he now looked for God's grace (*fazl*). According to the *Bayan al-Arifin*, a *dervish* of Dar Bela had initiated him into a new spiritual lore. Qazi Qadan could see that he who failed to establish a sense of generativity fell into a state of self-absorption and self-conceit and in which he would only look for the fulfilment of his personal needs. There came in his life a time for reflection and also for integration with the people at large and not with individuals—be they the rulers of the land. Not only he himself, his daughter Bibi Fatima and his grandson (through her) Mian Mir also took to the path of Spiritual Unity. Mian Mir was one year old, when his grandfather Qazi Qadan died; thus, he had the privilege of having his grand father's blessings, physically too. During his grown-up age, he was, as we know, so much known for his syncretic thought that he became the prince Dara Shikoh's friend, philosopher and guide, and was invited by the Fifth Sikh Guru to lay the foundation stone of the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

Qazi Qadan paves the way for the Sindhi Sufi poets of the later times. As is evident from the following chapters we find many an echo of Qazi Qadan's verses in those of Shah Abdul Karim and Shah Abdul Latif. He greatly influenced the two poets and, through them, others in the Sindhi poetic tradition. The later poets made more explicit use of Sindhi folk-tales like Sasui Punhu, motifs like spinning and dying and images like boat and swan. In fact, Qazi Qadan provides a great link in the history of Indian sub-conticental Sufism, which is essentially monistic, from the days of Abu Ali Sindhi Sufi, the instructor of Bayzid Bistami (d. 874) to this day. It is the peculiar chemistry of the soil that makes the Indian sub-continential Sufi poetry distinct from the purely Islamic Sufi poetry, if any, elsewhere. The present writer is of the view that Sufism as Islamic mysticism is a contradiction in terms, for the Sufis have never had a comfortable place in Islam, and that Indian Sufism in the broad framework of Bhakti Movement s one of the finest expressions of Indian composite culture.

Now let us look in the light of the sociology of knowledge at the reality, and also at the "super-natural" reality viewed from that reality, in its Sindhi particulars as expressed in the poetry of Qazi Qadan.

II
The Baits in Translation

1. Endless are the Ayats[1] and other utterances
   vocalised by i's and a's;
   In absolute faith in Him,
   He takes care of all His creatures.
2. As you go on your studies—
   even if you read hundreds of books,
   All that these say is,
   you won't meet the Beloved that way.
3. I haven't read any of the books—
   the Prophet's Tradition,
   Hanifi Law or Arabic Grammar in the rhymed form,
   It's a different place
   where I have met the Beloved.
4. People went on reading the Qur'an, millions of times,
   But they couldn't know the self within.
5. If they don't seek His vision even for a moment,
   How can they really claim His love and kindness ?
6. Whether I sleep, sit, stand, speak, sing
   or stroll along the walks,
   My mind is stretched out to You:
   I have You in me.
7. Forget all other letters,
   remember only Alif[2], the first one;

1. The *bait* alludes to the *ayat* of the Qur'an. The paradox of faith and infidelity in Sufism is quite apparent here, too.
2. *Alif*, the first letter of the Perso-Arabic alphabet, stands for Allah. It also symbolises the still, dispassionate flame of the lamp, to which the Sufi poet refers in this *bait*.

Light the lamp which may never be extinguished.

8. As a scribe writes *lam* together with *Alif*,
   So is my heart united with my Beloved.
9. Ever since I heard clearly the call from within,
   I have aligned my heart with Him.
10. From the very beginning,
    my beloved is intimate with me;
    My heart gladly traverses the difficult paths for Him.
11. He is not to your South or North,
    not this or that side (of the river);
    You wander about, all confused :
    see Him in yourself.
12. With the seas inside,
    you ask the whereabouts of the ocean.
    The pearls are within you;
    why don't you dive and pick them ?
13. Those who look into themselves
    and enter into the calm ocean of soul,
    Will see with their own eyes
    the priceless pearls, deep down.
14. I look for the Master
    who shuts himself in and is a veritable swan;
    He picks pearls
    from many a place in the water.
15. No one has ever returned
    after having seen those close to Him;
    So, who will recount the tales
    regarding God ?
16. The swans of that lake are just here;
    They narrate the tales of God
    to those who ask for them.[1]

---

1. The *bait* No. 16 is, obviously, in reply to the *bait* No. 15. Sometimes the Sufi poets would think aloud and enter into monologues with themselves in their *baits*.

17. Though in the same pond,
    no mutual relationship exists between them:
  Frogs at the bottom
    have no intimation of the blooming lotus above.
18. If the frogs in the pond
    knew something about the lotus,
  They won't merely vegitate
    in the dark cavern of the earth.
19. Some quite near ones may be far away,
    others at a distance quite near and dear to us;
  Lo! those stupid frogs know not
    the lotus in the some pond.
20. Mindful of Him in your eyes, you see Him, O youth;
  Inside you are the holy Mecca and Multan.[1]
21. The eyes re-turn from the sky above,
    the eyes like the clouds;
  They will purify the narrow lane[2]
    and find the Beloved in there.
22. This falcon has become a royal falcon,
    he doesn't kill birds any more;
  His eyes set on the Divine Throne,
    he swings on the high minaret.[3]
23. Envision those who have annihilated themselves,
    and traverse the skies all the time.

The images of 'the lake' (the other world of the divine mystery and 'the swans' (the souls inhabiting that lake) recur in the later Sindhi poetry, too.

1. Cf. Hujwiri, 'Ali ibn 'Uthman Data Ganj Bakhsh of Lahore, who said: "Anyone who is present with God in his house is in the same position as if he were present with God in Mecca."
2. The narrow lane stands for the middle nerve, *susmna nari*, representing the principle of absolute unity. It means that the love lane is very narrow: the two, or the 'two-ness' cannot negotiate through it.
3. This *bait* signifies the *nafs mutm'in*, the soul at peace.

24. At all the places
He is the only One God;
Those who have annihilated themselves,
will see Him.

25. True are my relatives:
they dwell in the city of Truth;
Whatever they speak comes out from truth:
they say the truthful words.[1]

26. Loving are my relatives:
they live in the city of Lovingkindness;
Whatever they say to me
is out of loving care.

27. The eyes saw the face and became restless for Him;
she will be all right only when He talks to her.

28. The boatman who pulley-tightens
the ropes of minds,
Will take the people on board the boat
to the other shore.

29. I don't see the One, whom I seek;
the unsought ones are in crowds:
Even though they look very nice,
the berries don't equal the mango.

30. I don't want a dull, ordinary snake:
such ones are in millions;
I look for the One in whose head
the jewel shines.

The universe is a palace
with millions of doors and windows;
From wherever I look
my Beloved is in front of me.

---

1. A human soul is a bride and the Supersoul is a bridegroom. This bridal imagery is unique in its description of the sweet relationship with the divine husband and parents-in-law.

32. First, know yourself,
(then) to know the Beloved is easy;
Also, keep to that very door,
from which you are not driven away.
33. First, lose yourself :
one who annihilates oneself will attain Him;
Turn your face within,
He is in you.
34. You are the hero of heroes,[1]
a jogi known all over the world,
You are our Pir,
who helps us find Him within ourselves.
35. I was asleep in a slumber of ignorance,
the jogi woke me up;
He cleansed my mind of the dirt
and showed me the essence.
36 Very few path-finders set their foot
on the untrodden land;
One among hundreds finds
the secret trace of that tract.
37. When the river is in spate,
its canal overflows its embankments;
Similarly, the affair with the Beloved
cannot remain shut up in the heart.
38. You have not in you
as much intense fire as I have;
The Beloved is the Centre of Fire:
by it only others are inflamed.
39. Following Him closely, and wailing,
I go to the mountains;
Let me meet the very Beloved
for whom I feel grief.[2]

1. *Insan-i Kamil* (Perfect Man).
2. The *bait* refers to the Sindhi folk-tale of Sasui-Punhu. Punhu's brothers took him away from Sasui one night. Here, she is described to be in search for him.

40. You remember Him
 only when you are in some trouble;
 Normally, you are not mindful of God
 who has created the souls.
41. Long loud cries will rise from within those,
 who have pain:
 Have you ever seen anyone
 wailing without pain ?
42. As the paper is to black letters,
 so is my Beloved to me;
 I sacrificed my outer eyes,
 shedding tears and tears.
43. I read the (worldly) black letters
 on the paper in such a way
 That the Beloved in 'unseen' white letters,
 whom I had sought, I found.[1]
44. I underwent millions of hardships
 to see the Beloved outside;
 But it was by looking into myself that I found Him :
 my Friend is within me.
45. By crying, don't disclose your love:
 live under control;
 So long you don't meet the Beloved,
 you burn your body like firewood.
46. It is better, the word of the Beloved
 should remain within you;
 What good result did you achieve
 by recounting it to others ?
47. From inside of the kiln, heat comes out;
 We bake and burn in penance:
 this burning is inside.

1. The *bait* No. 43 extends the metaphor of the *bait* No. 42 : the seeker sheds tears of blood for Him and the writing in black (the phenomenal world) is wiped off the paper (the ground of all beings). Now he beholds Him all by himself.

48. Injuries are deep inside the body,
 they aren't visible from outside;
 The physician too will feel a shock and scream,
 when he sees such wounded ones.
49. Sometimes the berry trees flower,
 at others there is not a single blossom;
 Sometimes the Beloved visits my heart,
 sometimes I long for His call.
50. As you have not made your body
 as slim as the needle for applying collyrium,
 How can the Beloved
 place you in His eyes ?
51. On the day of great reckoning,
 even if seventy suns awfully burn :
 I will consider them all as clouds,
 if the Beloved meets me.
52. If you are in for the union of love,
 give up secrecy and proclaim it;
 Get some deadly poison,
 swallow it for the sake of your Beloved.[1]
53. I don't care if it be a well-habitated place
 where thousands of people live;
 My eyes don't feel satisfied
 unless there is my Beloved.
54. The Indus flows just as fast as possible
 in its big bed;
 By its even flow throughout the country,
 we came to imbibe patience.
55. There is a solitary banyan tree in the field:
 I love it very much;
 The Beloved sits in its cool shade:
 a single tree, yet a forest in itself.

---

1. If one proclaims the union with God, one (like al-Hallaj) has to be ready for death. The path of unity is difficult.

56. O mother! now I have forgotten the timings
of the ritual prayer:
Who'll still celebrate the Id?—
I have met the Beloved!

57. As lungs are in a body,
so are the fasting, Id
and ritual prayer (in our system);
But it is still different type of work
which is required for God's mission.

58. A boil is burst in the stomach
but the Mulla cuts off the flesh;
He has dived in the dust, a futile exercise :
may God answer my anguished cry!

59. O Qazi! don't sermonise that much:
you are knowledge from head to heel;
When the camel (of your final journey) leaves
who will load the heavy bag (of your knowledge)
on him ?

60. Adding butter and honey to wheat flakes,
the Mulla eats them;
Ask him
if he loves God as well.

61. He gave you, to praise Him,
a tongue in your mouth;
You don't ask for the Great Creator;
instead, you talk of unpleasant things.

62. We can't quit our habits:
the habits pertain to wrong things;
This camel leaves out the wheat spikes
and goes in for the cheap, coarse grass.[1]

63. Those who have love in heart are beautiful,
though they be untidy outwardly;
In them
is the flaming light of the Beloved.

1. Camel is symbolic of *nafs-i ammara.*

64. To the True Master, don't tell a lie;
He who is in your heart, knows everything.
65. From the Beloved's side
the seasonal bird *papiha* came here;
People couldn't recognise him,
but we talked to each other.
66. If you were as true to the Master
as you are to the world,
This boat would float on the plains,
where there is no water.
67. The Master loves truth,
He likes it;
The Mars cannot burn the truthful,
the snake cannot bite him;
Truth walks on the seas, falsehood is but a straw fire;
Always, truth punishes falsehood.
68. Not eating anything in the water,
babihas[1] chose to die by drowning;
If you but know what that means,
you won't be gluttonous.
69. Everybody is brave, until challenged face to face;
When the swords strike, the brave plunge in.
70. Even if you gave me millions of bodies,
and on each body millions of heads,
On each head millions of mouths,
in each mouth millions of tongues,
And all those tongues sharp and articulate, sang, as one,
How could I praise you enough, O Lord ?
71. What you hand out (to others),
you yourself get back;
Sisters and brothers have left me,
but You don't leave me, O Lord.

---

1. White, little birds dwelling on the waterside. Though living on the water, they don't eat fish, etc , avaiable in plenty there. Symbolic of the persons who remain unworldly in the world.

72. The day declines, the evening descends:
 soon the night will follow;
 Standing upright, the boatman gives a call,
 the boat is close to the river-bank,
 in all readiness to go.[1]

73. Don't make a litany of your 'I', 'I'
 and thereby insult the Beloved;
 Even though you have ground your ego very thin,
 hang on the handle of the grinding-stone.

74. The deserted hut wants an answer:
 where has the Friend gone away ?
 All the straws of which it is made
 have fallen down, out of despair.

75. All the aches are hard to monitor,
 but there is no ache like this one:
 God alone knows how it plays
 inside like an instrument.

76. Why do you cry for others ?—
 Cry for your own grief:
 Get together your provisions,
 be prepared, for no one will remain here for ever.

77. What a sweet sleep you enjoy
 when the stream along the bank roars around !
 The waters have eaten into the soil,
 where your resting place is.

78. You slept the whole night,
 covering the head like a dead body's;
 Neither do you think
 of any seprations (for the journey ahead),
 nor have you any anxiety
 of how you will meet Him.

79. While the dried stalks are still on the bank,
 you think of a safety buoy made out of them;

---

1. With a few changes in its first line, the *bait* appears among the ones by Shaikh Farid (d. 1265) in the *Adi Granth*.

Crash of the bankside may occur,
all too sudden.

80. If the mast supporting the sails of the vessel is broken,
while you are in the midst of the sea,
Use your arms as oars;
don't call others for help.

81. Why didn't you launch the boat ?
...after mending the sails early, O you ignorant;
Only when you confronted the waves
you thought of this !

82. Even if you are a good swimmer,
ask them about the expertise;
Many knowledgeable swimmers went to sleep
in the whirlpools, off the shore.

83. What Obahiyo said to them, they didn't lend ear to;
This brought the hunters to a breach with the Beloved.[1]

84. Where the big boats
face the hard times,
There with Your grace even the small ones
reach the other shore.

85. Where even birds feel frightened
and reptiles scared,
There if He is with me,
I'll cross the difficult mountain passes.

86. Lightning, clouds and wind:
don't be afraid of the waves all around;
Take an expert pilot,
(then) there is no fear of the boat capsizal,

---

1. This *bait* refers to the Sindhi folk-tale "Moriryo-mangarmachhu". An experienced fisherman, Obahiyo by name, had seven sons, Moriryo and his six brothers were also good fishermen. Their father had warned them not to go in one particular direction. But they paid no heed to his advice and fell prey to a crocodile. This is how they paid the price for disobeying their father. Also, Cf. Baloch, *Mehran*, 1979 No, I, pp. 138-39.

87. O you sleeping ! wake up, the night is all over;
    Your luck will rise; don't forget the Beloved.
88. Forgetting the Beloved, they weep tears of blood;
    out of ignorance they do this;
  Losing the principal sum in gold,
    they end up with handfuls of dust.
89. They bear the brunt like the earth,
    and are steadfast like a mountain :
  Kinship may be established with those,
    who don't shift grounds with every whiff of wind.
90. If a friend at times appears to be a foe,
    one should not feel bad;
  Though a shawl be reduced to rags,
    the wax in it doesn't lose its dye.
91. There is nothing substantial in it,
    although it looks so durable;
  The world is like the saffron colour :
    you take a little walk, it fades away.
92. I thought, golden was the shining surface of water;
  It changed its colour,
    turned black due to the muddy bottom.
93. All of them have erred,
    erring came down from them !
  Ever since Adam and Eve erred,
    the whole world has been erring.
94. You stupid !
    the place where you broke the jewel negligently,
  Why didn't you cry in repentance there,
    retrieving its two pieces ?
95. You stupid ! since you have broken the jewel
    out of ignorance,
  Approach the jeweller (for its repair),
    retrieving its two pieces.
96. In the shop you buy salt
    and ask for a free gift of musk !

With the soap of truth,
why don't you cleanse your mind ?

97. Among the landed gentry, neighbourhood and bazars,
they counduct themselves in crazy ways:
From the shop they buy a goat
and ask for a free gift of camel !

98. While you kept on drawing the fortune-telling lines
the sowing season was over;
You ask those who idled away the time
as to how it feels to starve in the harvest season !

99. Having stumbled they repent,
they repent again having stumbled again;
How in a simple stubbornness
do they waste the sowing seasons !

100. If you are true to your Master,
why be afraid, even when asleep ?
On waking up, you may even dance
on the burning coals.

101. Like the water, I imbibe colours;
The Master Himself gives colours : all colours are His.

102. From grains You create granaries,
plants from seeds;
It's Your Kingdom, O King :
all others are but small chieftains.

103. From seed-coats buds grow;
He creates forests and burns them down;
God alone has the knowledge
of His secrets.

104. Even if he goes to Rum,
he can't supersede his fate—
It will be just some garlic on his bread;
whatever has been written (by fate)
is never erased.

105. Even though You don't give me,
You are my hope;

How can I leave Your door ?
You, the greatest of all kings !

106. Never give up hope in God;
If some opportunities escape you,
the Great Master will bring many more.

107. You are my prop, my help,
You are an impediment against impediments,
You alone are in my eyes,
You alone are in my bones,
I speak to You, cheek to cheek :
what need is there to give a call ?

108. Falcons and lions—
both of them live in the forests;
How can they eat grass ?—
whose natural food is flesh.

109. Whom I made friends with,
I couldn't appropriate the people;
All the friends in this nice court (world)
went back on their word.

110. Mind and pearl, if broken;
don't become the whole again;
Don't go by the hearsay,
the eye-witnessed is truth.

Qazi Qadan's seven baits already known to us

Out of the seven *baits* already known to the Sindhi scholars, the two—Nos. 1 and 7—appear in the preceding collection of *baits* at Sr. Nos. 3 and 35. The remaining five *baits* are as follows :

1. People study grammar,
but I contemplate the Beloved;
Whatever I read, I read again and again—
one and the same letter Alif.

2. The other letters I read
turned into stumbling blocks;

Those letters suddenly leapt up before me
like crocodiles.

3. The Friend was within me:
as I woke up, he was gone;
I searched for Him here and there, but in vain:
the lower self punished me severely.[1]

4. The sea strikes up in all directions,
overflowing the high and low land;
Parts merge into the whole
it is all Oneness,

5. I swear against negation:
there is absolutely no "Not He";
Except the Beloved,
I don't see anyone anywhere.

---

1. The *bait* alludes to the Sindhi folk-tale of Sasui-Punhu.

Shah Abdul Karim

Shah Abdul Karim's poetry and *malfuzat* (sayings) in Sindhi appeared for the first time in a Persian work, *Bayan al-Arifin*, written by the Sufi poet's disciple, Mian Muhammad Raza ibn Abdul Wasi', *alias* Mir Daryai Thatawi, in 1630, seven years after the Sufi poet's death. The *Bayan al-Arifin* contains introduction, seven chapters and epilogue of what Shah Abdul Karim said for the *hidayat* (instruction) of his *murids*. It collects his wise sayings, aphorisms, instructive tales and the Sindhi *baits* (verses). The manuscript remained in the drak until it reached the hands of one Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad Maluk who translated it into Sindhi in 1798. In 1874, Makhdum Abdul Samad ibn Haji Muhammad Muquim Nawrangpota made some modifications in the old Sindhi translation and published it from Bombay. In 1904, Mirza Qalich Beg, a distinguished Sindhi author, edited the *baits* in Sindhi. He says in his *Risala Karimi* that while editing it he collated 'the manuscript by the author himself and other manuscripts available now'. In 1937, Allama U. M. Daudpota published *Shah Karim Bulriware Jo Kalam*, an edition marked by his great scholarship and erudition, and kept Shah Abdul Karim's *baits* in the original form. Since the first edition of Daudpota's work was out of print and its second edition was not forthcoming, Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi edited *Karim Jo Kalam* from Sukkur Sindh, in 1963. He has in his book given Shah Abdul Karim's *baits* separately at the end also.

I

One of the major poets of Sindhi, Shah Abdul Karim[1] has been called by Allama Daudpota as the Chaucer of Sindhi literature.

He was born in 1536, in the town of Matiari (then called Mat Alvi) in the present Nawab Shah district in Eastern Sindh and lived to be eighty-seven in 1623 at Bulri, a village of the *taluka* Tando Khan.

He was born in a notable Sayid family which traces its lineal connection to Herat and was descended from Sayid Haider who had alongwith Amir Timur come from Herat to Sindh in 1398. Shah Abdul Karim was seventh[2] in descent from Sayid Haidar.

He was still a little babe, when his father died. He was brought up by his mother and elder brother Sayid Jalal. When he was six years old, he was admitted to a local *maktab* where he took little or no interest in conventional studies. He is stated to have said (*Bayan al-Arifin*) that his teacher used to send him and his school-mates to collect firewood from a nearby jungle and also memorise lessons on their way. While his friends remembered their lessons, he remembered God.

As a young boy, he was immersed in God. In Bulri Tando Khan village, as in other villages in Sindh, the *Sama'*, the gatherings where Sufi songs accompanied by the simple rural

1. His biography is mainly based on the *Bayan al-Arifin*, which has been extensively quoted by all the editors of his work
2. Cf. U. M. Daudpota, *Shah Karim Bulariware Jo Kalam*, p. 30A. Daudpota shows Shah Abdul Karim to be the seventh in Shajara or genealogioal tree, that is, Shah Abdul Karim bin Sayid Lal Muhammad bin Sayid Abdul Momin bin Sayid Hashim bin Sayid Jalal Muhammad "Jararu" bin Sayid Sharfuddin bin Sayid Mir Ali bin Sayid Haider.

music, were held. These gatherings drew men of all ages and had deep impact on the thoughts and emotions of the young Shah Abdul Karim as they had on the early age of his great-great grandson Shah Abdul Latif in the later times. Shah Abdul Karim's attraction for these gatherings increased with the passage of time. His elder brother Sayid Jalal, a worldly man, would like the young Karim not to waste his time and to complete his school education. Once when he found him away from his *maktab* and in the *Sama'*, he pulled him out, gave him a good beating and led him back home. It was on this occasion that Shah Addul Karim as a young boy broke spontaneously into poetry :

> Say Allah is one,
> learn no other speech,
> Keep on writing in your mind
> this true word alone !

It was the first of his 92 *baits* and augured well for the development of Sindhi poetic tradition which grew earlier, to be sure, in Qazi Qadan (1463—1551) and reached its climax in Shah Abdul Latif.

When Sayid Jalal took Shah Abdul Karim away from the *Sama'* and brought him before the mother, she scolded him (Jalal) for having slapped his younger brother and told him that he was perhaps not aware of his brother's high spiritual nature. Thereafter, Sayid Jalal did everything according to what the young Karim said and tried to keep him away from the domestic worries.

Free from the household affairs, Shah Abdul Karim engaged himself in hearing the discourses on life and religion by the learned, sitting in the company of *faqirs.* Once as he was going home after listening to an absorbing talk by Makhdum Ziauddin of Thatta, a noted man of learning of his days,

the Makhdum remarked about him, "I wish I could see this boy in his adult, full-blown glory."

The elderly Sayid Jalal was a staunch believer in *shari'ah* and, therefore, he forced Karim, now a youngman, into marriage. It was Karim's view at that time that a seeker of God should not get married for the marriage hindered his way of life. But after marriage he paid due attention to his wife.

One day, Shah Abdul Karim saw an old man staying in the mosque of his village. He served the vistor well and carried out his commands religiouly. After about six months, the old man narrated his life-story to him. His name was Sultan Ibrahim. He belonged to Bihar and was once a soldier under a ruler. He killed many persons in a battlefield and fear of God seized his whole being. He deserted the fierce battlefield for 'aimless' wanderings in the nature. Now he was a fuller man. Shah Abdul Karim was already impressed by his way of life and on hearing the account he became his *murid.*

In his young age, Shah Abdul Karim looked after his family well. The sudden death of Sayid Jalal placed on him the new responsibility. His *murshid* Sultan Ibrahim asked him to serve his household in the way his elder brother had done. He worked as a labourer in the field and earned the family's livelihood. He served his mother devotedly in her old age.

When on the field, he would often yield to his fellow-labourers' requests and sing the *baits* in his sweet and sonorous voice and they would insist on completing his share of labour. Rhyme and rhythm brought ease and flow to their task of the day.

Once Shah Abdul Karim inadvertently divulged his *zikr*, or liturgy, to someone and found to his utter dismay that his *murshid* was not in the village mosque as usual. Barefooted,

he went in search for him and reached, miles away, the *daira*, or circle, under the spiritual headship of Miran Yusuf. He found him there. Sultan Ibrahim had not met Miran Yusuf personally before. He knew him through his disciple Shah Abdul Karim and others. When he saw Karim barefooted, he gave him his own shoes to wear. Karim did not wear them. Instead, he went to the market-place and got a cap made out of the shoes and put it on. The *murshid* was pleased with him. Sultan Ibrahim had a plan to go for *Hajj* soon. But how could he break in words to Karim the news of coming separation ? So the *murshid* gave him money to go to nearby Thatta and bring some loaves for him. Karim spent from his own pocket and kept that money as *tabarruk*. But on his return he did not find his *murshid*. He had left again for an undisclosed destination. He broke down and wept. Guided by his intuition again, he went to Lahri Bunder where he saw him boarding a boat. The loaves on his head, 'tears of blood' in his eyes, he looked a picture of reverence. The *murshid* told him everything now. But Karim beseeched him to take him along with him. The *murshid* didn't hear. He asked him to go back and serve the family, instead. And the boat moved on to a distant shore.

Later, Shah Abdul Karim came in close contact with Sayid Miran Yusuf and Makhdum Nuh and became the *murid* of the latter. It was due to the Makhdum's teachings that his growing mystic fervour was tempered with the *shari'ah.* Before his dedication to the Makhdum, he had often experienced so much exaltation that he had felt like putting off his *godri*, too, and live in the nature's nakedness like *'alif'*. He did not feel so, after becoming his *murid.*

During his young and middle age, the Sufi poet would rise very early in the morning, perform ablutions and give the "call" to the Faithful from the village mosque. This done, he would engage himself in *zikr*. Having offered the *fajr* prayers

in congregation, he would practice contemplation (*muraqibah*). Then he would say the *ishraq* prayers and go home where he would be occupied with the household chores like cleaning pots and cooking food. He would feed boiled rice to his children and come out to collect food from the neighbouring houses for the *faqirs*. After feeding them his wife and he took a little for themselves.

Now it would be the time for Shah Abdul Karim to go to the field where he ploughed, and cut down grass for his oxen. He would return home around the mid-day and offer the *nafl* prayers, the two *rak'as* of them. He would go to the mosque to give the "call" for the *zuhr* prayers. He would do it again for the third time (*asr*) before the sun-set. The intervening period between the *zuhr* and *asr* prayers would be utilised on the field again in tending plants and feeding bullocks. After the *asr* prayers he would sit in the mosque until the *maghrib* prayers were offered. Then he would go home and help his wife in cooking. Afterwards, he would collect food from the neighbourhood for the *faqirs*. He would see to it that no one went to sleep without having food. If somebody was left without it, he would give him his own share, which used to be always small. He ate sparingly and reduced himself almost to bone and skin. Only then a seeker of God, he thought, could meet Him. Only then he would say to his *nafs*, or desire, "there is not much left in me to feed you".[1]

When all his sons and disciples retired to their beds after having meals, Shah Abdul Karim would perform ablutions and offer his *nafl* prayers. Then he would go to Rahot town. As he would pass by the mosques of small villages en route, he would fill water in the earthen pots kept there, and pray for the fifth time between dusk and midnight (*isha*) in one of them. If he found somebody sleeping there in a mosque, he

1. Cf. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim Jo Kalam, malfuzat* section, p. 102.

brought him more comfort by rubbing and kneading his fatigued limbs with his hands. Across the river he would follow the path to the Makli hills (near Thatta) and on his way would visit the adoration of Shah Jhando, the saviour ferryman[1]. And then he would come back after the third watch of the night to his village mosque where sometimes the very first *rak'at* of *tahajjud* sent him in the state of *wajd*. He would hardly reach the other *rak'a*, for very soon it would be the time for giving the "call" for the *fajr* prayers. People knew nothing about the severe discipline he underwent, excepting a few persons quite close to him. The common people wondered even at his giving the "call" to the Faithful so early in the morning.

The *bayan al-Arifin* says, Shah Abdul Karim travelled a lot. Even during his old age, he sometimes undertook journeys to far off places. He travelled extensively in Sindh and went upto Ahmedabad in Gujarat.[2]

The Sufi poet lived by the sweat of his brow, believed in the *halal rizq* and was never lost in the *talab rizq*. During his daily work also he was not away from God. He spent whatever he earned and never saved for the future. The hard work on the field would bring him small earnings which meant many a time austerity for him and semi-starvation for his family. Yet the Sayids were contented and happy and felt proud of their *faqiri*.

1. Thatta is at a fairly long distance from Bulri. One wonders how Shah Abdul Karim undertook the to and fro journey on foot everyday. But both the *Bayan al-Arifin* and *Tuhfat al-Kiram* give this account.
2. Cf. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim Jo Kalam*, the *malfuzat* section pp. 112-13. Shah Abdul Karim met a *faqir* in Ahmedabad. The *faqir* kept quiet for a long while. When he spoke, he said the following *bait* :

   Heko jo akhar vingro, jo Gur tusi de
   Andhare ghar divala, phir phir jot kare.

—"If the Guru were to give you to recite the one curved word (*Om*), it would be to you as the light in darkness."

Once a *faqir*, Ahmed by name, asked the Sayid, "What do you do for your sustenance ?"

Shah Abdul Karim said, I do digging and cultivation."

The *faqir* put another question, "Then how do you remember God at that time ?"

He replied, "I just can't forget Him. Take an example from the day-to-day life. When a woman with jars full of water on her head walks and also busies herself with talking to her friends, do those jars deter her from walking and talking ?"

Shah Abdul Karim exhorts his fellow-beings to work out their destiny through devotion and action (*Bhakti* and *Karma*) and says in his *baits* :

> Like a jar poised on a woman-watercarrier
> and a bird on the water,
> Our Beloved in the same way
> has been close to our soul. (13)

and

> Give your heart to the Beloved
> and your body to the people;
> Private cloisters and public mosques
> go together for the general weal. (7)

Shah Abdul Karim was very much respected by the people and had many *murids* during his old age. Though physically not well after the age of 64, there was a spiritual glow on his face. Severe austerities and travels almost broke down his bodily health. But they had increased his capacity and experience to work for the suffering humanity. If somebody approached him to have a word with the zamindar or ruler on his behalf, he would go on the horse-back, on which he hardly managed now. Ordinarily, he had little or no connection with the rulers in particular and political life in general. He like all other people at that time saw the bloody clashes between

Mirza 'Isa Khan, the Sindhi ruler, and Mahmud Khan of Bakhar, who had declared himself to be the independent ruler of Bakhar and flouted Mirza's central authority; the pillage of Thatta by the Portuguese from Goa; the atrocities of Mirza Baqi and Mirza Jani Beg, son and grandson of Mirza 'Isa; the transfer of power from the Turkhan rulers to the governors under the Mughal King Jahangir. Since he could not do anything to better the political life of Sindh he prayed to God and turned to *tasawwuf*, a philosophy of life offering solace and peace during the uncertain times.

Shah Abdul Karim passed the last days of his life in seclusion and sang the Sindhi *baits* usually after midnight. He died at the age of 87, in 1623, and was survived by three sons and three daughters. The 'prayer-carpet' (*sajjadah*) was then passed on to his son Sayid Din Muhammad and afterwards to his successors Abdul Dalil, Abdul Ghani, Abdul Wasi' Muhammad Abdul Zaman, Muqim Shah, Sayid Wasi' and others. The latter Sayid Abdul Wasi' was a contemporary of Mir Ali Shir Qani' the historian, and Shah Abdul Latif, the poet. Shah Abdul Latif was simple in his habits as his great grandfather, Shah Abdul Karim, and wore dark clothes like him. Besides being himself a monument to his grandeur, he built a mausoleum to his memory.

II

Shah Abdul Karim does not seem to have belonged to any of the Orthodox Orders of Sufis, for these Orders observed the routine of prayers and fasts and did not bypass *zuhd, ibadat, taqwa and riyazat*—the limits set by their founders. It is, therefore, curious that Shah Abdul Karim and Shah Abdul Latif are stated to have been of the Qadiri Order[1] for, as we know, the Qadiri and Suhrawardi Orders "had strong objection

---

1. G.M. Sayid in his book *Paigham-e-Latif*, Hyderabad Sindh, 1952, p. 52, says, "Shah Abdul Karim and, *therefore*, Shah Abdul Latif were of the Qadiri *Silsilah* or Order" (emphasis mine).

to the *Sama'*."[1] Both the Sindhi poets belonged to a family of hereditary religious teachers and therefore observed religious practices. But they had a liking for the *Sama'*, or the mystical dance, right from their childhood and could not keep away from it during their ripe and mature days. Shah Abdul Karim says, "Some people engaged themselves in reading books and some in other occupations, but I learnt the *Sama'* only and did not care for any other occupation."[2] To him there was no difference between the *zikr* and the *Sama'*.[3]

Like the Qur'an, the *Risalo* emphasises the moral code as the basis of human behaviour (see the *bait* Nos. 23, 31, 35, 40) and underlines the importance of austerity and discipline in one's life (see the *bait* Nos. 7, 22, 34, 36, 69). Shah Abdul Karim gave the pantheistic meaning and significance to the Quranic expressions such as 'He, The First and the Last, and The Apparent and The Hidden', and 'wherever you turn, you will behold the countenance of God,' and 'He is nearer to you than your jugular vein', and 'every moment He discloses Himself in a fresh glory' and sang :

> Separation and union
> are one and the same;
> God, the best of proposers,
> will unite the lover and the loved one. (50)

This *bait* No. 50 uses a part of the Qur'an's *ayat—Wallaha khair almakirin*—as the third hemistich and affirms the poet's faith in *wahdah-al wujud*, or the doctrine of Immanence, that is, in a concept of God different from that of the Qur'an. Shah Abdul Karim knew Muhiyuddin ibn Arabi (1165-1240) and his view of *wahdah-al wujud* very well and it was on this doc-

1. M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, p. 298.
2. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim Jo Kalam*, the *Malfuzat* section, p. 120.
3. Ibid., p. 121.

trine, in the main, and not on the orthodox Sufism, that his own view of life was based. On the authority of the *Bayan-al Arifin*, we know that once Shah Karim said, "A seeker of God should lose conscious existence or movement first. He will attain the *ma'rifat* or come to know God's secrets then—the secrets which Ibnul Arabi's philosophical book *Fusus al-hikam* won't give."[1] He said the following *bait*:

First lose yourself,
then only you find Him,
The Beloved is not separate from you,
just turn your face within. (19)

One, who gives up himself, supposes no two existences, his own and God's. He doesn't say, *Ana l-abd*; he says, *Ana l-Huqq*. Shah Abdul Karim says:

Those for whom we yearn
are none but we ourselves;
Now, O Doubt ! be gone,
We recognise the Beloved. (74)

III

The two main organising principles of poetry are analogy and prosody. As for analogy, it serves as the basis upon which a symbol or a metaphor or an image is founded. It serves them in stating the unstated, in giving meaning to the unexpressed; for as the poet said, "If I could say what it means, I should not have to say this." So arts—paintings, poems, prose-pieces, dances, etc.,—sciences, languages, myths, religions are analogic forms.

Analogy is related to metaphor, sign, symbol, allegory and simile, and provides a springboard to reach the inaccessi-

---

1. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim Jo Kalam*, the *malfuzat* section, p. 66.

ble and to know the unknown. The western concept of symbolic imagination with analogy at the basis is not different from the Indian concept of *dhvani*, or suggestion, with its three kinds *vastu-dhvani*, *alankara-dhvani* and *rasa-dhvani*. The first two kinds are inadequate in themselves and the third kind (*rasa-dhvani*) gives words and sense the capacity of producing *rasa* (aesthetic delight). These three kinds of *dhvani* are, as B.B. Paliwal observes, like the three stages of poetic imagination in ascending order, finally leading to the symbolic imagination.[1]

The Sufi poet Shah Abdul Karim also seems to have begun with knowing man in relation with men, their customs, occupations and environment and finally come to know himself in the process. And then he gives a name and, if unable to give a name, an analogous interpretation to what he knows. Shah Abdul Karim sees a blacksmith hammering on an iron-anvil, a village-maid carrying pitchers on her head, a bird 'floating' listlessly on the water (see the *bait* Nos. 2 and 13). The objects in the *vastu-dhvani* offer to him the palpable parallels. Then he develops his suggested meaning and apprehends the objects in *alankaras* and (in the words of T.S. Eliot) "objective correlatives". Shah Abdul Karim watches a baited hook and a fish and correlates human beings to the hooked fish :

> The baited hook, O fish !
> which has pierced your throat
> Has taken in many of your kind
> and thrown them on the ground. (37)

The *bait* No. 38 also gives the same suggested meaning. The *bait* Nos. 60 and 61 describe the ordinary fishermen of Kalachi who are caught up in the whirlpool of passion and

1. B.B. Paliwal, "Symbolic Imagination or Dhvani", an essay in *Principles of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit*, ed. by R.C. Dwivedi, Delhi, 1969, p. 175.

therefore cannot reach the other shore. On the other hand, the divers, or men of contemplation, are able to get at 'treasures of the sea (God)'. They are away from Kalachi and its inhabitants thriving on killing fishes, big and small, in creeks. In another *bait* (No. 42), at once revealing and concealing, the poet imagines a swan diving down in the deep and a stork playing in the shallow waters. He says :

A swan feeds on pearls,
he dives deep down;
He who plays in the shallows
is only an ordinary bird. (42)

Shah Abdul Karim is able to find an object or a human situation which gives expression to his personal emotion and thought in an impersonal way. *Camel* stands for the lower self in man here :

Camel of desire ! Why did he not drink
sweet, clean water ?
I vainly tried to induce him
but he impulsively falls on the poisonous creeper. (23)

Sasui (see the *bait* Nos. 14, 17, 24, 26, 52, 63, 66, 69, 74, 86), Sohni (the *bait* Nos. 32, 62), Marui (the *bait* Nos. 30, 35, 48, 58), Mumal (the *bait* No. 51) and Lila (the *bait* No. 59), the heroines of the Sindhi folk-tales present Shah Abdul Karim in the role of a female-lover and depicit their heroes Punhu, Mehar, Khetsen, Rano, Chanesar as God *a la* Indian mysticism Shah Abdul Karim's references to these tales have allegorical significance; he, through these heroines of twin qualities—devotion and action—seeks union with the Lover and finally is one with Him. For example, the *baits* pertaining to the folk-tale *Sasui Punhu* :

Move at a faster pace, O Sasui,
for when the sun sets, it sets,
Punhu has already reached
near the Hara mountain. (86)

× × ×

Those for whom we yearn
are none but we ourselves,
Now, O Doubt ! be gone
we recognise the Beloved. (74)

In the third kind of *dhvani* the *rasa dhvani*, both the poet and the reader are left at a stage where a poem as a whole, and not in parts, contains the suggested meaning. The parts—words, phrases, sentences—lose their independence in creating this meaning. The words become the unstruck melody of the Word. Shah Abdul Karim says in the state of trance, or *wajd* :

What if the husband forgot her ?
She has not forgotten him;
No one will ever say
there has been darkness in her house. (12)
There is only one tale
which I recounted yesterday :
Sisters, don't be angry with me,
I cannot tell you another. (29)

Shah Abdul Karim's words are of the Sindhi language, only 29 words and one phrase are from Arabic and eight words are from Persian. But when it comes to the symbolic or suggested meaning, Shah Abdul Karim's poetry becomes independent of words and the reader rises above them.

Poetic From

Till 1953, the poetic form of Shah Abdul Karim and other Sindhi poets had not been rightly recognised[1]. Many Sindhi scholars saw it based on "the laws of jungle" and not on those of prosody because they were conversant with *Ilm Aruz* and not with Pingala Muni's Sanskrit *varnik chhandas*, the Prakrit-Apabhransa *matrik chhandas* and the various *chhandas* in the modern Indian languages. They thought that the rhyme came ungovernedly sometimes in the middle and sometimes at the end of the line in their poetry. In 1953, J.K. Bhavnani evinced a greater understanding of the Sindhi poet's form. But he too did not identify the Sindhi *baits* composed on the model of *Tunveri Duho* and *Baro Duho* of Dingal and Gujarati, named them as "Ardha Doha Ardha Soratha" and "Ardha Soratha Ardha Doha" respectively and wrongly considered these two varieties as *Khas Sindhi Qabiliyat* (special Sindhi ability).

Like *Doha* and *Soratha*, which we know for many centuries now, *Tunveri Duho* and *Baro Duho* have two stichs (or four hemistichs) of 48 *matras* in total in each of them for these, too, are varieties of *Doha*. But it is the rhyming scheme and varying number of *matras* (either 13 or 11) in the 4-hemistich sequence that make the difference. A *Tunveri Duho* may be defined as having in its first and fourth hemistich 13 *matras* each and in its second and third ones 11 *matras*, both rhyming at their close. But *Boro Duho* is its reverse. In it we have 11-*matras* each in the first and fourth hemistichs rhyming together. Two things stand out clearly that, in the first place, as the *Soratha* is the reverse form of *Doha*, the *Baro Duho* is of *Tunveri Duho*, and secondly, the 11-*matra* hemistichs rhyme together in all these forms.

---

1. Cf. M. Jotwani, "Poetic Form of Shah Abdul Latif", *Endeavour*, Vol. VI, New Delhi, 1970.

It is noteworthy that among the well-known seven *baits* by Qazi Qadan, two are *Dohas*, three are *Baro Duhos*, one is *Soratha* and one is *Tunveri Duho*. Again, out of 92 *baits*[1] by Shah Abdul Karim, as many as 84 are *Baro Duhos*, *Dohas*, *Sorathas* and *Tunveri Duhos* put together. Break-up is 30, 25, 16, and 13 respectively. Three are *tanhas* or 2-hemistich verses (Nos. 65, 68, 90) and two *baits* (Nos. 51 and 60) have faulty rhymes and 'uneven' number of *matras*.[2] Out of the remaining three *baits*, in the *bait* Nos. 44 and 52, Shah Abdul Karim knits a line of *Soratha* succeeding a *Doha* or a line of *Doha* preceding a *Tunveri Duho* in each and thus gives three stichs. Three stichs instead of the usual two are also there in his *bait* No. 85 in which a line of *Doha* between two lines of a *Soratha*, or a line of *Soratha* succeeding a *Baro Duho* is interlinked. Here is the "special Sindhi ability" and not in the use of *Tunveri Duho* and *Baro Duho* which were already there in Dingal. Shah Abdul Karim introduced this fine masonary of laying the different hemistichs, bringing into interaction the varied forms of *Doha* and turning them into a rich mosaic of *bait*. Thus we see that the tradition and individual talent go together in the great Sindhi poet.

1. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim Jo Kalam*, p. 211n. and p. 220.

2. The poetry of Shah Abdul Karim is metrical. But, as we know, the Sufi poets sang their *baits* and, therefore, in their works sometimes short vowel is lengthened or long vowel is shortened for musical reasons. Besides this, in musical metre the vowel preceding a conjunct consonant is not counted *guru* whereas it is always *guru* in poetical metre (see K. C. Pandey, *Comparative Aesthetics*, Varanasi 1959, Vol. II, p. 516). As in Kabir's *Dohas*, etc., in quite a good number of Sindhi *baits*, some changes will have to be brought in to make them a literary *genre*. These have to be done carefully keeping in view the particular use of language and preserving the paritcularity of thought expressed therein.

IV

The Baits in Translation

1. Say Allah is one,
   learn no other speech,
   Keep on writing in your mind
   this true word alone.
2. My heart is used to hammering
   like iron on the anvil;
   With all the remembrance of the Beloved,
   it has not melted away.
3. If you wish to meet the Beloved
   follow my advice:
   Like a man turned mad
   give up all relationships.
4. Give heed to my advice
   and do not hold converse with one
   Who speaks out matter
   about the Beloved to another.
5. Take not the speech of animals,
   insects and birds to be their speech,
   By Allah, this tumult and sound
   is of the Beloved Himself.
6. Make a bonfire of all your wisdom;
   Only love will take you to Him
   Through what you think is a difficult sea,
   but indeed is not wide enough.
7. Give your heart to the Beloved
   and your body to the people;
   Private cloisters and public mosques
   go together for the general weal.
8. As the day dawns, go
   and mend whatever differences
   There are with the Beloved
   for you cannot do without Him.

9. He who is in my mind while I am awake
   is there also in my sleep;
   My mind the Beloved has fastened with His
   (sleep is also His worship).
10. Do not disclose the story
   for it will lose its flavour;
   The fist had better remain closed,
   for if opened it's all empty air.
11. All are water-carriers,
   who take jars on their heads,
   Some fill water for their Beloved
   and some do it for wages.
12. What if the husband forgot her ?
   She has not forgotten him;
   No one will ever say
   there has been darkness in her house.
13. Like a jar poised on a woman-watercarrier
   and a bird on the water,
   Our Beloved in the same way
   has been close to our soul.
14. Had my beloved heard
   the calls which I made
   From outside Bhambhor,[1]
   he would not have gone away.
15. Sweet is the desolate lane
   where the beloved is by himself,
   Turn away from the place
   where crowd hundreds of base men.
16. He who is upright on his part
   finds his way to the wholeness
   And celebrates an Id every-day.
   For others, the Id comes when it will.

1. Bhambhor is the native place of Sasui, the heroine of the folk-tale *Sasui Punhu*.

17. Nobody ever took with oneself
two things at once from Bhambhor:
Yearning for the Beloved
and attachment with the world.

18. Love does not come by messages,
mere wishes do not win over the beloved,
The eyes will have to shed tears of blood
on dark and lonely nights.

19. First lose yourself,
then only you find Him;
The Beloved is not separate from you,
just turn your face within.

20. Make no alliance with the worldly man,
turn not your eyes that way;
O defeated one, why don't you
look for the foot-prints of the Real One?

21. Whom you took to be your beloved
O Friend! He's of this world only,
O defeated one, the Real Beloved
will not leave you in lurch.

22. Sell off these asinine ears
which refuse to hear
The story of the Beloved;
buy other ones, instead.

23. Camel of desire! Why did he not drink
sweet, clean water?
I vainly tried to induce him,
but he impulsively falls on the poisonous
creeper.

24. O woman! avoid sitting under the thatched roof,
stand, burning in the sun;
You chose those people as your own
who are of the far-away sunny land.

25. Until you have plugged
 the peep-holes to the world,
 You will hardly have
 a full view of the Beloved.
26. Friend, away with your home,
 the caravan is speeding away from me;
 Your heart, unlike mine, knows no burning
 like the wick of a lamp.
27. The trick of theft lies in secrecy,
 the object in thieves' view remains unknown;
 First they conceal themselves,
 thereafter the things they steal.
28. People don't hear lovingly
 messages from the Beloved;
 The companions who give messages to them
 are knowers of the Truth.
29. There is only one tale
 which I recounted yesterday;
 Sisters, don't be angry with me,
 I cannot tell you another.
30. We come from where
 there are no bright, orange clothes;
 Even when we go to a marriage,
 we are in rags, with *loi*[1] on our head.
31. If by spending five *dams*[2],
 a friend is benefited to the extent of one *dam*.
 Even then you are the winner,
 considering the great good done.
32. Either leave not your home,
 or return not, O Sohni![3]
 Be of one mind, be one with Him
 and break all other relationships.

1. A kind of thin blanket. This *bait* alludes to the Sindhi folk-tale *Umar Marui*.
2. *Drachmas*.
3. The heroine of the folk-tale *Sohni Mehar*.

33. He is here, He is there,
    He abides in my mind,
In His own light
    He beholds Himself.

34. Wear the ragged clothes,
    remove the twists of your turban;
Achieve that wholeness
    which pleases the Beloved.

35. Umar ![1] can a woman in bondage
    put on good clothes?
My lover feels embarrassed before others
    who reproach him because of me.

36. Thirsty young men do not care
    to take the money, tied in a knot,
Proudly they go to the wine-seller
and give their heads for a sip.

37. The baited hook, O fish!
    which has pierced your throat
Has taken in many of your kind
    and thrown them on the ground.

38. If on seeing the string from a distance
    you had moved away quickly,
The hook would not have brought you
    O fish! in this difficulty.

39. Those who churn themselves with questions
    are brave and wise;
For a good trait in a man
    is like butter in the milk.

40. Do not go about rebuking,
    treat them also well who are uncivil to you;
If you desire to meet the Beloved,
    consider their faults as virtues.

---

1. A Rajput king Sumro of Umarkot, Sindh, who took away Marui, a village maid, forcibly from the well. He tried to win Marui's love, but in vain. *Umar-Marui* is a Sindhi folk-tale.

41. The brave divers
    do not even look at the shallow waters,
Their eyes seek the treasures
    deep down in the midstream.

42. A swan feeds on pearls,
    he dives deep down;
He who plays in the shallows
    is only an ordinary bird.

43. I tested my people in the North
    and those in the South;
It's the fuel one has earned
    that makes the fire burn.

44. The sandal-wood when cut
    will paint the axe in its own lovely hue:
A friend may turn his face a hundred times
    he does not give up his friendly nature.
The knower knows that
    anguish creates love.

45. Love and pride, O friend,
    go ill together,
There is complete agreement
    among the Sufis on this point.

46. The friend is tolerant,
    you may mount your desire on desire;
The guava wood though worn with age
    can bear much weight.

47. Having been through the fire for His sake,
    one should look for the distant land;
Only that place is our own
    where we are with the Beloved.

48. Those who appeared not in response to calls
    and came not back on time

Have forfeited their place
in Malir[1] now.

49. Dwelling beside the river
the foolish die of thirst.
They cry like the afflicted,
seizing not the moment.

50. Separation and union,
are one and the same;
God, the best of proposers,
will unite the lover and the loved one.

51. Many a king, with camels laden,
could not cross the magic forest, Kak;
Though rich in many ways,
still they departed in despair

52. Half-awake as Sasui was,
she lovingly put out her hands
And was startled to find the bed desolate
Punhu was not on the mattress.
Jumping out she said;
I'm robbed, Punhu is gone.

53. The foolish never grasp the Reality,
they look for it here and there;
How will the eyes in which dwells duality
see the One ?

54. Having told it many a time,
they tell the story of the Beloved again;
They learnt the one,
this one is all they know.

55. If you want freedom from want,
begging with the Beloved you pass time;
Some persons will give you loaves
and some will give you rice.

---

1. The native place of Marui. Here it symbolises the place of man's descent: the True Land.

56. If you but see Him once
You will not say He is angry at your fault;
He of Himself with a handful of diamonds
will come up to you.
57. The river is in spate
and I am also ready with my net and tackle;
He comes not easily in net,
I wait and wait.
58. I only appear to be here,
Really I am with the Marus[1],
O Umar ! those who dwell in my mind
are in Thar, only there.
59. On whose heart
You've left an indelible mark,
O Chanesar ![2] How can you now
draw yourself away from her ?
60. No one returned safe
from the whirlpool of Kalachi,
Some lost their tackle
Some repented their daring.
61. Call of the fellow-fishermen of Kalachi
reaches not my ears now;
Look for the boats of the divers
at the landing place on the other side.
62. Poor Sohni[3] entertains no thought
other than that of Mehar,
One can find her even at the night
crossing the river for him.
63. I do not blame my friends
for they have not seen my Beloved;
Else, they would also
cry wildly like me.

1. Marui belonged to the clan of the Marus, her guardians.
2. The hero of the Sindhi folk-tale *Lila Chanesar*
3. The heroine of the folk-tale *Sohni Mehar*.

64. They are very happy
with lutes on their shoulders,
They had a date with Sapara Jam[1],
the benevolent Samma; last night.
65. From which lake do we swans come
And where do we feed ?[2]
66. O friend ! all dreams are unsubstantial,
no one should trust a dream;
Asleep, we were together
When I woke up, he was no longer there.
67. That land is not like other lands,
These birds no footprints make,
There godly souls abide
and pick fruit while flying around.
68. The cottage of my Beloved
is farther than the Beyond.
69. It was not the custom in the past
that he who comes as suppliant to this door
Should stretch his legs
and sleep away the night.
70. Until they are washed clean
by shedding tears,
How can the bleary eyes
see the Beloved ?
71. The sea does not destroy the directions
or overflow the high and low land;
It's not that all ceases to be, except the One.
Each being lives on in Him.
72. The Beloved has a way
unheard of and unknown,

---

1. Sapara Jam, a benevolent king in the Samma dynasty of Sindh; here he allegorically stands for the Benevolent King, God.
2. It is said, these two hemistichs or *charanas* brought tears of love to Shah Abdul Karim's eyes and he could not proceed further to complete the *bait*. Two more *tanhas* of this kind are Nos. 68 and 90.

Utter bewilderment
is the lover's fate.

73. He Himself is the king,
And Himself the envoy sent,
He Himself receives the envoy
and accredits Himself.

74. Those for whom we yearn
are none but we ourselves;
Now, O Doubt ! be gone,
We recognise the Beloved.

75. You were created
out of nothing;
What does your saying "I" mean,
when you are nothing still ?

76. You live in "Nought but God";
be not away even for a moment from Him;
Man is God's manifestation,
why break the whole in parts ?[1]

77. He guides us to the Fount of Light,
to Himself,
So to our source we all return,
Hold fast to this root of the matter.

78[2]. His footprint is everywhere, O Sisters
but difficult to discern,
For even those who saw it
knew it not for what it was.

80. If the Beloved is away
from our eyes for a moment,
It is as if we had not seen Him
in a whole life-time.

---

1. Cp. The *malfuzat* section, *Karim Jo Kalam*, p. 123.
2. The *bait* No. 78 in the *Risalo* is a repetition of the *bait* No. 33 there in.

81. He whose heart is not in attendance
and eyes do not hold the image,
Empty, empty is his life,
he breathes in vain.

82. He is here
within the cottage of your heart,
If you but unlock the door,
you, nay, all the people will behold Him.

83. Turn your face within,
don't look outside for Him like a beast;
But it's difficult to cross the current
of contemplation
and reach the other bank.

84. When You freely grant everything,
it is absurd that I should beg;
I make myself look foolish,
not knowing my position.

85. With tassels in their turbans, the minstrels go,
riding on camels and humming,
They had a rendezvous with Him last night
and are happy today.
The bridegrooms go home
and have no anxious moments now.

86. Move at a faster pace, O Sasui,
for when the sun sets, it sets,
Punhu has already reached
near the Hara mountain.

87. Having bewitched you for some time,
all earthly love will like a shadow vanish,
Let it not happen
that you fix a trustful gaze upon its form.

88. Those with faith crossed the river,
those without it were afraid:
The Mullah found it too swollen,
you brave it with a smile.

89. All the four hems of my garment
are in the mire, O Sisters !
Those in love with Love
wade through it fast.

90. Even from a distance I could see
that they are born of those who dive
into the deep.

91. We too have come
with blessing of Khurqan;
You will give us
what you gave to Abul Hasan al-Khurqani.

92. Now that they have met their Love,
their turbans have awry turns, their eyes
an unusual light;
With their bows stretched to the full
the courageous went a-feasting to Kutch,
the distant land.

93. What you regard as an untruth
is entirely in you,
Whatever pertains to the Beloved
is nothing but Truth.

Shah Inat

An important link in the unbroken chain of medieval Sindhi poets—unbroken by his presence, Shah Inat (c. 1623-1712) was a unique personage in the literary history of Sindh. Not to be confused with his younger contemporary Shah Inayat of Jhok, a social reformer and spiritual leader of his day, he was a distinguished Sufi poet. But for his great poetry, the glorious heights reached by Shah Abdul Latif's poetry in the 18th century would have looked all too sudden. He took birth when Shah Abdul Karim died, and when he was no more Shah Abdul Latif was young. Thus, he served as a significant link. His poetry was informed of the native poetic tradition. And in its turn it influenced the succeeding generations of Sindhi poets. We may, therefore, take a brief look at him and his poetry.

His name was Shah 'Inayatullah, but he was popularly known as Shah Inat, or Miyan Shah Inat. He belonged to a Rizvi Sayyid 'Family' of Nasarpur, a town in Hyderabad district of Sindh. Unlike other Rizvi Sayyids, he belonged to the Qadiryyah Order of Sufis, for his father, Shah Nasruddin, was a follower of some Qadiriyyah preceptor.

Though it was expected of a Sayyid, he did not evince any deep interest in the study of Persian, Arabic and Islamic theology. Instead, he was, like other Sufis, drawn to musical assemblies and mystical dance gatherings. His love and affection for the fellow-villagers in their day-to-day life showed itself in his poetry written in the language of the laity.

He travelled widely in the sacred geography of North-West India and knew the aspirations of the people. Though he was not much articulate politically, he had all the sympathies with the native Kalhora dynasty and its increasing influence consequent on the decline of Mughal power in Sindh.

By the age of 80, he had established himself as a great poet of Sindh. Novices in the field of Sindhi poetry from far and wide would come to see him. Shah Abdul Latif was one of them.

Miyen Shah Inat Jo Kalam ('Poetry of Miyan Shah Inat', Hyderabad Sindh, 1963) is the first definitive edition of his work. Ably edited by N.A. Baloch, it carefully compares and collates the two manuscripts, transcribed in the early 19th and early 20th centuries, and aptly incorporates a considerable volume of the poet's verses, not covered by the abovesaid two manuscripts, but current in the oral tradition. The first MS. of c. 1820 comprises those *baits* and *wai's* by Shah Inat, which one Sanwan faqir remembered by heart after about 100 years of the Sufi poet's death.' That his *baits* and *wai's* were passed on from one generation to another speaks of his immense popularity. This MS. was prepared at the instance of Mian Ummid Ali Shah, Shah Inat's great grandson. The second MS. of the first quarter of the present century collects almost all the *baits* and *wai's* of the first MS plus many others, some of which actually belonging to the Shah Jo Risalo. On a close scrutiny of the two MSS., it is found that the first is more dependable. After tapping the second source of oral tradition, as many as 47 verses by Shah Inat were recorded from all over Sindh.

Miyen Shah Inat Jo Kalam presents Shah Inat's 469 *baits* and 42 *wai's* under 22 *suruds*, or modes of singing : *Kalyan, Jaman, Khambhat, Srirag, Ramkali, Marui, Prabhat, Dhanasri, Jatisri, Purab, Lila, Asa, Kapaiti, Dahar, Mumal Rano, Bila-*

wal, *Desi*, *Sorath*, *Sarang*, *Todi*, *Kamod* and *Karairo*. Shah Inat preferred to call them *suruds*. But his successor Shah Abdul Latif referred to them as *surs*. Both of them like other Sufi poets sang their poetry—that too sometimes *not* strictly metrical[1]—in *suruds* and *surs*, in a kind of music which was *not* of rigid classical character.[2] Lately, we have appropriated to them a new categorical name of *loka-ragas*, in contradistinction to the *ragas* proper. The learned editor errs when he tries to equate the *suruds*, or for that matter the *surs*, with the *ragas* and *raginis* of the classical system.

Essentially a folk music, Shah Inat's *suruds* were mainly concerned with the heroines of Sindhi folktales, traders, weavers and selfless seekers of the Supreme Reality. Thereby he adumbrated Shah Abdul Latif in particular and other Sindhi Sufi poets in general.

In his poetry, Shah Inat alluded in an elaborate way to the heroines of the well-known seven folktales of Sindh—Lila, Marui, Mumal, Nuri, Sasui, Sohni and Sorath—and used the tales as metaphors for high spiritual life.

Lila was a princess who bartered away Chanesar, her husband, for a necklace of diamonds which her rival Kaunru gave her to be able to spend one night with him. Chanesar disowned Lila, for her fault was grave. Now, Lila repented :

> Come home my Love, come back to me;
> the necklace I have since returned. . . .
> Forget about my faults, forgive me my Love,
> the necklace I have since turned down. . .[3]

1. Cf. Dr. Motilal Jotwani, *Shah Abdul Latif : His Life and Work*, Delhi, 1975, pp. 75-83.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-92.
3. *Miyen Shah Inat Jo Kalam*, edited by Dr. N.A. Baloch, Hyderabad Sindh, 1963, p. 130.

Marui was kidnapped by Umar of Umarkot. She did not accept Umar's offers of good comfortable life at his palace and remained faithful to her own people in the desert. She is a symbol of steadfastness and also of love of one's country. She says :

> I remember the desert I lived in
> And wait for my friends in whose company
> I saw the desert blooms and ate berries;
> If only Umar frees me, I'll go back to them,
> be with them, one of their fold.[1]

A seductive lady, Mumal lost her lover. Finally, she becomes steadfast in her ways and finds him in her heart :

> With a view to wooing him
> Mumal's friends put on their best necklaces
> and scented their hair.
> But it was the simple Mumal who found him for herself.[2]

Nuri was a fishermaid. By her perfect humility she endeared herself to the King Tamachi. And then all his haughty queens stood awaiting him, having learnt how to win his favours :

> All others were beautiful,
> but the fishermaid was so in a special way;
> Loving and being loved, she did not give up humility:
> the modest and shy Nuri won Tamachi's heart.[3]

Punhu, the prince of Kech Makran, was attracted by Sasui, the washerwoman. But he was taken away from her, one night. Left alone, she searches for him in the mountains. Shah Inat exhorts her :

> Viewing the tough mountain passes,
> don't slacken your pace (O Sasui !);
> It is only the worldly lovers
> who are scared by the difficult paths;

---

1. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

First, you deck yourself with the garland of Reality,
then, says Inat, Punhu will soon take care of you.[1]

Sohni was married off to a man she disliked. Every night she swam across the Sindhu to meet Mehar, her beloved. Once, her earthen pot which she used as a swimming-aid broke and she was drowned. The Sufi poet says :

The night was dark
and she was without the earthen pot;
With love in heart she waded through
the turbulent river
as if it were a smooth path.[2]

Sorath, the queen of King Diyach of Girnar, Gujarat, sacrificed herself for the sake of love for her husband. Diyach gave his head to the wandering minstrel and Sorath followed him into the world of the dead. Highly pleased with the minstrel's song, Diyach offered him to ask for anything he liked to have. As the intrigues of fate would have it, the minstrel asked for his head. The kind and generous king gave it. Now, the song resounded in Sorath's head. She bid farewell to life and to the pain of separation from him. Shah Inat poignantly describes the fateful moment when Diyach says to the minstrel :

Why, why be shy of demanding my head—
what is this life before the moment of ecstasy
I experienced through your immortal song ?
Let people know, I gave what you asked for.[3]

1. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.

Shah Abdul Latif

Shah Abdul Latif (1689—1752) was great-great grandson of Sayyid Abdul Karim, great grandson of Sayyid Jamal, grandson of Sayyid Abdul Quddus and son of Sayyid Shah Habib. Shah Abdul Karim had migrated from Matiari to Bulri. But this family of Sayyids, in the generation immediately before Sayyid Shah Habib, returned to the neighbourhood of Matiari, to Hala, its original place in the Hyderabad (Sindh) district. Sayyid Shah Habib, however, was living in his *Haweli* or mansion which he had built in the village of Bhaipur in Hala *taluqa* where Shah Abdul Latif was born. In Hala *taluqa* there was another village Kotri Mughal, which was not far from the *Haweli*. The Mughals there had constructed a small *Kot* (protective compound wall) around their mud houses. Hence their village was called Kotri Mughal of Sardar Shah Beg Mughal. After Shah Latif's birth Shah Habib shifted from his *Haweli* to Kotri. Both the villages are now in ruins and the simple mosque built by Laung *faqir* on the site of the house of Shah Abdul Latif's brith-place is a lone vestige of the old Hala *Haweli*. But Bhit (mound) which is four miles away from Kotri and where the poet lived with his *faqirs* during the last ten years of his life is a place of renown today. Thousands of people visit Bhit to pay their respect and homage to the poet, who is also known as Bhitai Ghot (the Bridegroom of Bhit) after the name of that place.

Habib Shah's *Haweli* is in Hala taluqa of the present Hyderabad (Sindh) district—a district, named after the city of Hyderabad founded by Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, in 1768, that

is, a few years after the poet's death. Ghulam Shah Kalhoro was a contemporary of Shah Abdul Latif and his dilapidated tomb still exists, alongside the tombs of several other members of the Kalhoro and Talpur dynasties, in the northern part of the plateau on which the city of Hyderabad is situated. From the height of the massive structure of Hyderabad Fort, one saw at that time the whole of Hyderabad city and the surrounding area spread out at one's feet. In the East glimmers in the sun the Phuleli canal and on the West are set the rocks against the brown countryside with patches of greenery here and there. This district presents a diversified look with the range of limestone hills (the Ganjo), an expanse of forests and a network of canals in its lower reaches.

The Hala *taluqa* borders on the North at Naushahro; on the South at a portion of the Tando district; on the East by the Thar Parkar district; and on the West at the river Sindhu (or the Indus). The part of Hala near the Sindhu is fertile and bears rich crops. The Sindhu is a large river—nearly 1700 miles long from its source in Tibet to the Arabian sea. Within the limits from Kashmor to the sea, it ranges in width from 480 to 1600 yards. Its depth fluctuates from the average nine to the harsh 24 feet, the latter during the freshes. The Sindhu is famed in Sindhi song and story.

The climate of Hyderabad is like that of the other parts of Central Sindh, with the seasons, though four in number, reasonably resolved into two, the hot and the cold, succeeding one another so suddenly as to make no intermediate distinction. Thus, frost-bite and sun-stroke may occur on one and the same day.[1] The extremes of weather may bring harm to a person not belonging to this 'unhappy valley'[2], but its inhabitants develop

1. An observation made by Dr. Holmested, the Civil Surgeon Hyderabad, in 1869 (see *Sind Gazetteer*, 1876, p. 237).
2. *Scinde; or the Unhappy Valley* is the title of a book published in 1851, by Sir Richard Burton.

a synthetic power which keeps them physically fit and spiritually high.

A land of rich diversty, of arid desert and fertile fields, of level plains and hilly regions, of extremely hot and severely cold seasons, of the Sindhu river and the Arabian sea and also a meeting point of Hindu philosophy and Muslim thought, Sindh has for long periods seen 'unity in diversity'. Her poets, through their synthetic and magical power, to which Coleridge exclusively appopriated the name of 'imagination'[1], composed sacred *slokas* in Sanskrit and also sang *baits* in Sindhi. There has been poetry in the very geography of Sindh. In this land—where many races of the world came by sea from the South and by road from the North and where great religions and philosophies interacted—grew up generations of poets whose works are sublime in content. Shah Abdul Latif is easily the greatest of them all, in Sindhi.

It is generally agreed by all Sindhi scholars that Shah Abdul Latif was born in the year 1102 A.H. (1689)[2] in the well known

1. *Biographia*, Chapter XIV.
2. Dr. Ernest Trumpp said in his preface to *The Risalo*, Leipzig, 1866, that Shah Abdul Latif lived for 67 years from 1680 to 1747. Dr. Trumpp seems to have based it on the following notice (of Shah Abdul Latif in a biographical work *Miar i Salikan i Tariqat*, in Persian about the holy men of Islam) reproduced in English by Richard F. Burton in his book *Sindh, and the races that inhabit the valley of the Indus*, p. 83 : "This saint was the son of Sayyid Habib Shah, and was born in the beginning of the twelfth century of the Hijrah Era (about 1680) . . . . He departed this life in A. H. 1161 . . . ." The external evidence, however, gives the date of Shah Abdul Latif's death as 14 Safar, 1165 A. H. (1752) based on the oral tradition among the *faqirs* of *Dargah* recorded assiduously by Mirza Qalich Beg and also in a written work *Tuhfat al-Kiram* that he lived as long as Hadrat Paighamber Sal'am and Hadrat Ali, that is, 63 years. People in Sindh observe his death anniversary on 14 Safar every year. Dr. Sorley also says in his *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit* (p. 170), " . . . . the evidence is in favour of his having been born in 1689 and having died in 1752."

Sayyid family. He was descended from Sayyid Haidar who was genealogically related to the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali[1] and had come from Herat to Sindh with Amir Timur in 1398. It is interesting to know that a man from Herat came to Sindh and founded one of the Houses of Sayyids, the House known for at least two great poets of the Sindhis—Shah Abdul Karim and Shah Abdul Latif.[2] Sayyid Haider's father, Sayyid Mir Ali, was a man of means and a God-fearing citizen of Herat. He was genealogically related to Imam Musa Kazim and ultimately to Hadrat Ali. When Timur in the course of his campaigns, reached Herat with his army, on his way to India, Sayyid Mir Ali accompanied by his six sons went to meet him

1. The following genealogical table gives the ascending line of Sayyid Haider upto the great Ali. The other accounts of descent from Sayyid Haider to Shah Abdul Karim and from Shah Abdul Karim to Shah Abdul Latif and others are given elsewhere in the book. The following *shajara* is according to the *Shah Latif* by Lilaram Watanmal:

   Ali
   Imam Husain
   Imam Zainulabdin
   Iman Muhammad Baqir
   Iman Musa Kazim
   Sayyid Jafar Sani of Iraq
   Sayyid Husan al Akbari of Shiraz
   Sayyid Ali Jawari of Shiraz
   Sayyid Ibrahim of Shiraz
   Sayyid Hasan of Shiraz
   Sayyid Yusuf (also of Tirmiz)
   Sayyid Ali of Tirmiz
   Sayyid Husain of Tirmiz
   Sayyid Muhammad (was first at Shiraz and then at Tirmiz)
   Sayyid Mir Ali of Herat
   Sayyid Haidar

2. This description of Shah Abdul Latif's ancestry is based on the Appendix to the *Bayan al-Arifin* concerned actually with Shah Abdul Karim, Shah Abdul Latif's ancestor to the fourth generation. The *Bayan al-Arifin* was written by Miran Muhammad Raza alias Mir Daryai Thattawi in 1630, i.e., six years of Shah Abdul Karim's death.

and placed before him as many rupees as the number of soldiers in his troops[1]. Amir Timur was pleased with him and much impressed by the demeanour of his sons. While still in Herat, he gave to four of them, the governorship of Ajmer, Multan, Bakhar and Sewistan (now called Sewhan), respectively, the last two now in Sindh. The fifth one preferred to remain at Herat in charge of the family's affairs during the absence of his father who was to join Timur in his march to India. The sixth one, Sayyid Haidar Shah, chose not to accept any office but to go to India with his father.

After his arrival in India, Sayyid Haidar took permission of his father and Amir Timur to move about in the country. In his travels, he reached Hala Kundi (now called Old Hala) where he was entertained as the guest of Shah Muhammad bin Darya Khan, one of the leaders of the Halas, originally a Hindu tribe. For some reason, the Halas at that time were fined a sum of Rs. 525 by the governor of the place, Miran Muhammad. The fine was beyond the means of the poor Halas. Sayyid Haidar coming to know of this, paid off the amount of the fine on his own, and helped the Halas in their difficulty. The grateful Halas offered him the hand of Shah Muhammad's daughter in marriage. Sayyid Haidar, who had a wife and children already in Herat, ultimately accepted the offer and married the Sindhi girl Bibi Fatima. As Sayyid Haidar's mother, too, bore the same name—Bibi Fatima—the newly married lady came to be known as Bibi Sultana. Thus Sayyid Haidar laid the foundation of a Sindhi family of the Sayyids, each successive generation of which lived in Sindh and contracted marriages among the local Muslims who originally were Hindus and had become converts to Islam under the growing influence of the Muslim rulers and their religion.

1. The number of soldiers in Timur's army was given in the Appendix to the *Bayan al-Arifin* is 2, 62, 312. Allama Daudpota rightly argues in his *Shah Karim Bulri-a Ware Jo Kalam* that this number seems to be incorrect in view of (i) the historical fact putting this figure at 92,000 and (ii) Mir Ali's position in life.

Sayyid Haidar had lived in Sindh for one year and five months[1] when the sad news of his father's death in Herat reached him. At that time, Bibi Sultana was pregnant. Before he embarked upon the return journey to Herat, he made a will that his child, if son, be called after his father's name, Mir Ali, and if daughrer, be named after her paternal grandmother. A male child was born.

When Mir Ali, second in descent from Sayyid Haidar, grew up, he went to Herat to see his father. There he learnt to his grief that his father, having lived three years and twenty-seven days after his return to Herat had died. Sayyid Haidar had two grown-up sons in Herat. When they came to know that they had a third brother too, they would not give him a due share of the father's bequest. The court decided that a little less than one-third of their inherited fortune be given to Mir Ali. Mir Ali, too, immediately after his return to Sindh sent two-thirds of his patrimony to his step-brothers, though they were separated from him by about a thousand miles.

As stated earlier, Sayyid Mir Ali of Halakundi was the grandson of Mir Ali Herati. He had three sons: (i) Sayyid Sharafuddin, (ii) Sayyid Ahmed and (iii) Sayyid Murtaza. The third Sayyid had no issue and the families of the first and second Sayyids came to be known afterwards as the Sharaf Pota and the Miran Pota respectively, the latter after the name of Sayyid Ahmed's son, Sayyid Mir. The Sayyids lived in Hala for about thirty years[2] and then a major part of their clan shifted to a village, not very far from Hala, Mata-Wâro—

1. The biographers of Shah Abdul Latif, Allama Daupota and Din Muhammad Wafai, are agreed on this duration of one year and five months, obviously based on the authority of the *Bayan al-Arifin*. Dr. H.M. Gurbuxani has given it of three years and eight months, unauthenticated (see the *Shah Jo Rishalo*, Introduction Vol. 1, p. 8).
2. G.M. Sayyid, *Paigham-e-Latif*, Hyderabad, 1952, p. 3.

Goth or Matiari. In Mata-Waro-Goth, as the name suggets, there lived a *faqir*, who used to sit on a way-side and keep always a pitcher, *matu*, full of water for the wayfarers. The Sayyids in their times tried to change the name of Matiari to Mat Alvi or in the Persian script Mat 'Alvi.' But the native name of the town Matiari persisted for the reason of its simple and easy articulation. During their stay in Matiari, the Sayyids were divided into four important clans of the Jarar Pota, the Baqil Pota, the Musa Pota and the Mu'in Pota. Some of them shifted to many nearby villages and towns because of their increase in number, hardship of livelihood and domestic querrels. Shah Abdul Karim and Shah Abdul Latif belong to the Jarar Pota, a branch of the Sharaf Pota..

Shah Abdul Karim migrated from Matiari to Burli and came to be known as the *Bulri-a-Waro-Pir*, or the Pir of Bulri. His son Sayyid Jamal Shah died in Bulri as a martyr in a good cause. A gang of dacoits robbed a widow living there and decamped with all the valuables she had. Sayyid Jamal Shah chased the robbers and gave his life in the encounter with them. After his death his son Sayyid Abdul Quddus settled himself in Matiari.

But his son Shah Habib alongwith his family left Matiari and settled down in Bhaipur village in Hala *taluqa*, where his illustrious son Shah Abdul Latif was born. Shah Habib kept up to the family tradition of piety, devotion to God and service of the people. He was 'a perfect Man of God'[1]. People from far and wide would visit him to seek his blessings. With *dastar* (turban) on his head, *tasbih* (rosary) in his hand, green over-garment on his robust body, his dark eyes, shining forehead, flowing beard, henna-dyed hair, he looked a consummate

1. Mir Ali Sher Qani' Thattawi, *Tuhfat al-Kiram*, edited in Sindhi by N. A. Baloch, p. 388.

picture of learning, and piety.[1] When free from the *namaz* he used to come out and sit on his *gaddi*, or carpet, in *otaro*, or compound, of his *Haweli*, where the spiritually starved heard his winged words and the bodily sick had the pain-relieving, strength-giving medicines of curative herbs like *soya*, *podina*, *ajowan*, *zeera*, *saunf* for their ailments. Novices in the field of poetry approached him for advice and instruction. He insisted on their using Sindhi, the language of the people, and not Persian, the court language, as a vehicle of their thoughts and feelings for it was in one's own native tongue that one could express them best. He believed that there must be cadence and rhythm in all that was to be poetry.

In his discourses, Shah Habib quoted extensively from the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sindhi *baits* including those of his predecessor, Shah Abdul Karim. In his *Haweli*, as in a *Gurukul* or *Ashram*, there prevailed an atmosphere of thought—the atmosphere, which would stimulate and satisfy the natural urge in all visiting people to know the 'why', the 'wherefore' and the 'how' of things within and around them and would initiate different persons in different post-schooling disciplines of study, *e.g.* medicine, occult, science, philosophy, poetry, everyone trying to find truth in his own particular domain of knowledge.

Shah Habib gave charms and amulets, besides indigenous medicines, to the sick and offered prayers to God for those in difficulty. The people, too, showed utmost consideration to him and did voluntarily the jobs of shepherding his flock, cultivating his fields and chopping his wood for him. Visitors to his *Haweli* had their food from the common kitchen, run by them.

It is said that Shah Habib married three times, one after

1. "Habib Shah Ji Haweli", an essay by Wali Muhammad Tahirzada in the *Vankar*, Sanghar-(Sindh), 195?, pp. 81-85.

the other, for the sake of progeny.[1] Yet he did not have a male child to keep continued the descendancy of the great Sayyids. He opened his anguished heart to a dervesh of his times, Abdul Latif by name. The *dervesh* not only blessed him with birth of a son, but also made a prophency that he would be *qutb*, or the Pole Star, of his era. He desired that the son born be named after him—Abdul Latif, 'servant of the All Gracious'. Otherwise too, the *dervesh* said, names of the mortals should be after the great name of the Prophet and the names God loves best are, Abdul Rahman, 'servant of the All Compassionate', Abdul Qadir, 'servant of the All Powerful', Abdul Wahhab, 'servant of the All Munificent', Abdul Latif, 'servant of the All Gracious', etc.

Shah Habib's first wife gave birth to a male child, who, according to the holy man's desire, was called Abdul Latif. But the child soon died. Shah Habib gave the same name also to his second-born from her. Thereafter Shah Abdul Latif had no uterine brother. Shah Jamal, whose grandson of the same name succeeded Shah Abdul Latif, was his half brother.[2]

Abdul Latif's real mother belonged to the family of Makhdum Dayani, a 'majzub', *i.e.* 'a man touched by divine lunacy'. He was also called Makhdum Arabi, as he had come from Arabia. His mausoleum still exists in Old Hala. Thus, Shah Abdul Latif, was descended from parents, paternal and maternal, who were both spiritually elevated and socially privileged. For, as we know, the society treated the Sayyids with superstitious respect.

* * *

The child Shah Abdul Latif, predicted to be the Pole Star of his times, was not like any other child. Though born to a

1. Shaikh Ayaz, *Risala-i-Shah Abdul Latif* (in Urdu) Hyderabad, 1963, p. 3.
2. The table of descent from Shah Habib is given on the next page :

position of dignity and power, he was very humble in his ways. He spent days by himself beside flowers and buds, birds and beasts in the *otaro* of his *Haweli*. He loved solitude, a trait he inherited from his father. Shah Habib, too, used to be so much by himself at times that he was not even conscious of his son's presence in his room. Yet he (Shah Habib) was a man of worldly prudence. So, when he sent his son, now aged 5 or 6, to receive school education from Akhund Nur Muhammad Bhatti of Vai village, his son Latif, it is said, did not wish to learn anything beyond 'Alif', the first letter of the alphabet, and also that of 'Allah'. Upon this, he embraced him warmly and said to him : 'You are right and on the path of Truth. The opening letter of the alphabet 'Alif' is the Alpha and Omega of knowledge. I also know this mystic truth. But one should not dislike school instruction.'

Shah Habib

Jamal Shah — Shah Abdul Latif

Mubarak Shah — Sayyid Karimdino

Jamal Shah (who succeeded Shah Abul Latif)

Bachal Shah (left many children) — Karim Muhammad (sat on *gaddi*) — Qaim Shah (sat on *gaddi*) — Qaimdin (sat on *gaddi*)

Ummid Shah (sat on *gaddi*) — Muhammad Ali Shah (sat on *gaddi*) — Lutf Ali Shah (sat on *gaddi*) — Mir Muhammad Shah

Allahbux Shah — Alibux Shah (sat on *gaddi*) — Dital Shah (was mad) — Ghulam Shah (sat on *gaddi* after Alibux Shah)

Alibux Shah II — Nural Shah

Shah Abdul Latif, it seems, paid heed to his father's advice and rose to be a learned man of his times—a man having superb mastery over his mother-tongue Sindhi and good knowledge of Arabic, Persian, Hindi and other languages of his time and clime. The *Risalo* unmistakably shows that he had studied the Qur'an and the Traditions, Sufism and Vedantism, partly due to his academic training befitting a scion of the Sayyids and partly due to his personal observation of life in the company of Jogis and Sanyasins in his young age. His natural feeling, later in life, was that mere book-learnedness was no aid to the knowledge of Allah in His varied manifestations:

> Learn the letter 'Alif', forget all other learning;
> Purify your heart, how many pages shall you read ?[1]

This should not lead us to believe that he was an illiterate person[2], for such diatribes against book-learning were a common feature of the Sufi poetry. Another *bait*, in quick

1. *Shah-Jo Risalo* edited by Kalyan Advani. Bombay, 1958, abbreviated as *SJR* (KA); "Sur Yaman Kalyan", V/29, p. 25.
2. Fatehchand Vaswani (in *Shah Jo Rasalo* (*sic*), pp. 10 seq.) unhesitatingly regards Shah Abdul Latif as an illiterate man, obviously on mistaking the authority of *Tuhfat al-Kiram* in which the author Mir Ali Sher Qani' Thattawi says, "Although Shah Abdul Latif was an "ummi" (translated as "illiterate" by the Sindhi scholars including Fatehchand Vaswani), yet God had inscribed all the knowledge of the universe on the hidden tablet of his heart. When Mirza Mughal Beg Arghun died, one of the disciples of Shah Abdul Latif reckoned his date (by the Abjad method) by uttering the sentence; *bud khabith*, or 'he was mean'. Shah Abdul Latif, the Perfect Man, admonished him and said, 'Don't say this. Say: *Yak Mughal beh budah*, or 'he was a good Mughal'. Both the sentences give the same year i.e. A.H. 1124 (A.D.1713) (b=2, w=6, d=4; kh=600, b=2, y=10, th=500; total 1124: y=10, k=20; m=40, gh=1000, l=30; b=2, h=5; b=2, w=6, d=4, h=5; total 1124. A. H. 1124 abstracted from both the sentences.) In fact, this act performed by an "ummi" was nothing short of a miracle." (*Tuhfat al-Kiram*, edited in Sindhi by N. A. Baloch, p. 388. Observations and elaborations given in brackets of the above quotation are mine. The Abjad or Arabic method of reckoning dates derives its name Abjad from the four letters a, b, j, d, representing the old Semitic order of the Arabic letters. In the order each letter has a numerical value : a=1, b=2, j=3, d=4, up to y=10; then come the other tens : y=10, k=20, l=30, m=40, n=50, s=60, 'ain=70, f=80, s=90, q=100; then the other hundreds, up to gh=1,000.)

succession, not only testifies to his knowledge of 'Alif' in particular, but also of the alphabet in general. He says :

> O scribe ! as you write 'Alif' and 'Lam' together,
> So our Beloved is close to our soul.[1]

Mir Ali Sher Qani' Thattawi, who wrote an account of Sindh and its main cities and holymen in his Persion work *Tuhfat al-Kiram* (1767) fifteen years after the Sufi poet's death, regards Shah Abdul Latif's agile, literate and arithmetically correct statement, *viz., Yak Mughal beh budah* as a miracle and all his knowledge as a sort of special revelation. He does so out of great devotion to him and brings him near to the Prophet, who also is said to have been an "ummi". The word "ummi", as it is mentioned in the Qur'an for the Prophet before Revelation, has been generally translated as "illiterate" by almost all the commentators of the Qur'an. This word is the opposite of *ahl al-kitab*, or man of Law, given by God. As the Prophet did not know the Law of God previous to the Revelation of the Qur'an, he was referred to as an "ummi".[2]

Shah Abdul Latif was an "ummi" in the sense that he was not an "*ahl al-kitab*" (man of the Book), though the *kitab* (Book) in the form of the Qur'an he knew so well. In the main, he was a great man of *tariqah* and not of *shari'ah* in the strict sense of the term.

The Holy Qur'an in Arabic, Rumi's Mathnawi in Persian and Shah Abdul Karim's *baits* in Sindhi—all in manuscript form, these were Shah Abdul Latif's never-failing friends with whom he conversed day by day. Though there was not much of book-learning in Sindh at that time[3], he must have received his education in accordance with the family tradition of the

---

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Yaman Kalyan," V/31, p. 26.
2. Cf. *Studies in Islam*, Vol. II, p. 62. M. Ajmal Khan rightly argues that the word "ummi" has nothing to do with "illiteracy".
3. Cf. E.B. Eastwick, *Dry Leaves from Young Egypt*, London, 1849, p. 21.

Sayyids and this is amply borne out by many Arabic quotations from the Qur'an and the Hadith in his various "Surs".

Shah Abdul Latif had an unflinching faith in the great Persian poet Rumi. He refers to him in half a dozen *baits*[1], as in the following one:

> The whole creation seeks Him,
> He is the Fount of Beauty, thus Rumi says;
> If you but unlock yourself, you will see Him.[2]

The Sufi poet knew Shah Abdul Karim's compositions, some of which are intermingled with his own in the *Risalo*, and also many popular Bhakti compositions in Hindi and various other languages of North India.

* * *

Shah Abdul Latif remained in the company of children who scampered about in the open, the in hills and dales, in the desert and lakes and sang the Sindhi *baits*, stirring in soul the love for solitude and infinitude. He saw women spinning at their *charkha*, the potter at his wheel, the blacksmith at his anvil, the river-farers and desert-dwellers, the thunder and the rain, the flight of birds in the blue sky, the changing moods of man and nature, and wove all these experiences in the spiritual warp and woof of his immortal poetry.

In the young Latif, the people saw with no uncertain eyes the wonderful signs of his future greatness. Watayo, a *dervesh* of Thatta, presented to him two flowers, symbolically meaning thereby that he saw in him the fragrant spirit and radiant sparkle of Sindh.

---

1. *Cf.* *STR* (KA), "Sur Yaman Kalyan", V/10-15, p. 24.
2. *Ibid.*, V/12, p. 24.

At the age of 13, or 14, Shah Abdul Latif came in close contact with the octogenarian Shah Inat, a great Sufi poet of his day and remained in touch with him till his death in c. 1712. Shah Abdul Latif and Shah Inat's grandson, Shah Bilal, who also grew to be a poet, though less known, of the Kalhoro times, were of the same age. Yet Shah Inat felt more drawn to Shah Latif's compelling charm of the *baits*. Shah Bilal marked time at the very point from where he started, whereas Shah Abdul Latif floated his ideas in words and meaning that were perfectly fused. Shah Bilal, unlike Shah Abdul Latif, was so pusillanimous as to make the protagonist a mere observer and not a 'sufferer'.

It is on record that Shah Abdul Latif visited the grand old poet of Nasarpur, Shah Inat, quite a number of times. That he admired his verses and had great respect for him is clear from the fact that he used to feel such an urge to go and meet him that he would cross fifteen long, but really not-so-weary, miles from his village Kotri to Nasarpur in the same district. There he recited to him his own verses composed on the model of those of his (Shah Inat's) on the common themes. He would do so in the same manner as a respectful and receptive pupil might recapitulate in other words what his Master had said earlier. Shah Inat was delighted to see that Shah Abdul Latif took to poetry so naturally.

One day the young Latif, caught in the conflict of the phases of *qabz* (detracted from reality) and *bast* (expanded to reality), came to Shah Inat. The latter gave him solace, saying:

> Viewing the tough mountain passes,
> don't slacken your pace (O Sasui !);
> It is only the worldly lovers
> who are scared by the difficult paths;
> First, you deck yourself with the garland of Reality,
> Then, says Inat, Punhu will soon take care of you.[1]

---

1. *Cf Miyen Shah Inat Jo Kalam*, edited by N.A. Baloch, Hyderabad, 1963, p. 93 (Introduction). (Din Muhammad Wafai inadvertently attributes this bait to Sufi Shah Inayat Allah of Jhok, a personage other than Shah Inat in the history of Sindhi literature. See his *Lutf e-Latif*, Karachi, 1950, pp. 70-71.)

Shah Abdul Latif went home reassured and sang :

> In the face of the rough mountains, don't slow down your pace,
> Says Latif, pursue Punhu's path vigorously through the passes,
> O Sasui, feel the fire of love for Punhu and fare forward,
> Though He be hard, let there be great hope in you;
> Why say the Beloved is far away,
> When He is nearer to you than your very eyes ?[1]

In the beginning, Shah Abdul Latif's poetry had an element of improvisation, but after a few years it gave place to vindication of his individual genius.

Shah Inat died when Shah Abdul Latif was around twenty. The facts that Shah Abdul Latif was deeply influenced by him and that he lovingly admired his poetry after his death may be verified from the comparative study of Shah Abdul Latif's "Surs" and Shah Inat's "Suruds" which brings to the fore many parallel *baits* in thought and form. Shah Inat paved the way for emergence of Shah Abdul Latif as the greatest poet of Sindhi language.

* * *

About the same time, another incident of great importance occured in his life ; he chanced to visit the ailing daughter of Mirza Mughal Beg, a descendant of Shah Beg Arghun (d. 1522) and of Chengiz Khan in the remote past. Mirza Mughal Beg was of choleric temper. But he had great faith in Sayyid Shah Habib, the spiritual guide of the laity. So, when his daughter fell ill, he sent for him to obtain an amulet to ward off the evil spirit around her. Shah Habib being himself unwell sent his son to offer on his behalf the blessings of the Sayyids. Shah Abdul Latif saw the ailing daughter and was struck by her beauty. His youthful heart missed a beat or two. He held her little finger in his hand and felt her sick pulse through the

---

1. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

tip of that finger. He said, as if inspired: the prophet-poet in him was on his lips now:

One whose finger is in the Sayyid's hand need fear no fall.

But such a prayer of Shah Abdul Latif to God for her recovery and well-being incensed Mirza Mughal Beg, her father, instead of consoling him. He thought that the young man by holding her hand in his hand dared to hint of marriage with her. Coming to know of Shah Abdul Latif's love at first sight, Shah Habib made a formal proposal to the Arghun for his son's marriage with his daughter. The Arghun did not say anything to the Sayyid in reply, but adopted such means as compelled him to leave Kotri for Haweli, bag and baggage. The Sayyids built his Haweli at a place not very for from Kotri.

A dejected lover may become a poet. It was certainly the 'frustration in love' which helped to mature Shah Abdul Latif's mind. An unusual youth, he did not think of taking away his beloved by any anti-social means. Instead, the restlessness now gave edge to his poetic sensibility to carve out a niche for himself in the world of commitment *beyond* oneself, leaving behind the world of commitment *to* oneself or one's own immediate interest. Now he was in the ever glorious realm of the Reality, far away from the world of physical forms.

One of those days he happened to see some thirsty goats rushing to the bank of Sangro canal to quench their thirst with its cool, sweet water. When they had their fill, they abused the water with their excreta and did not wait to have another look at the bank. Had they not drunk their fill, they would not have sullied the pure water. The poet introspected, and from within him flowed the verse:

May I forever seek and never see the Beloved![1]

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Husaini", VII/3, p. 214.

His heart saturated with love, he lay once in a dazed stupor on a sand-dune for three consecutive days. Incidentally, a shepherd saw him lying in that state and brought the news to his anxious father. Shah Habib rushed to the spot and said in fright and agony :

Currents of the wind have wrapped all limbs with many sandy folds.

On hearing his father's anguished cry, Shah Abdul Latif completed the verse with a spontaneous line:

The breath yet lingers for viewing the Beloved.

He, then, went with his father back home. But he could not remain there for long and, one day, disappeared again from his village without informing his parents. He found in himself a desire which his previous experiences could not satisfy. He fell into the company of the Hindu Jogis and Sanyasins and wandered with them through many places in and around Sindh. Clad in the garments of a Hindu Jogi, he went to see Hinglaj, Dwarka and other places of pilgrimage for about three years. Such association enriched his experience in the spiritual field.

* * *

Shah Abdul Latif left the easy comfort of home and undertook long and difficult journeys on foot. The credit for this goes to his worldly love which 'combed him so, as a carder beats the cotton clean'[1].

As he left home, the first place he visited was the Ganjo Hill, the limestone range near the present city of Hyderabad. There is no mention of Hyderabad, and rightly so, in his *Risalo* for this city came into existence more than sixteen years after the poet's death. He refers to the Kali temple on the Ganjo Hill in his "Sur Khahori". As customary with the

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Asa" III/5, p. 360.

Hindu Jogis, he wore ochre-coloured[1] clothes and took the route from the Ganjo to Karachi (then known as Kalachi). On his way he saw many places of historical and legendary interest—the first among them being the Hellaya Hill. On it stood at that time a royal palace overlooking the Kinjhar Lake. With the north breeze blowing into the flowering plants on its sides and the silvery waves in it, the Kinjhar Lake became a cradle in which the Samma king Tamachi, Shah Abdul Latif recalled to his mind, sat beside the fisher-woman Nuri.

Therafter, he visited Thatta[2], a very large and rich city with a palace of the *Nawab* in it. Around the palace the city hummed with life, picturesque or chaotic, depending on how one looked at it. The streets were narrow, but the volume of commerce in the shops was tremendous. Sindh had a flourishing trade with the East and the West, with a strong merchant fleet to carry it on from Lahribunder and other sea-ports. It had a good agricultural base; irrigation was prevalent in many parts. Besides, its cottage industries were highly developed. Apart from the big city of Thatta, there were many cities coming up in Sindh at that time. From Thatta he went to

1. The ochre-coloured *kafni* is one of Shah Abdul Latif's relics on view at his *dargah* today. Of all his heroines, the poet has described Sasui the most in his *Risalo* and she is his mouth-piece, his alter-ego. She says in the "Sur Sasui Abri" (*SJR* (KA), IV-10, p. 123) that she will, like a Jogin, don ochre-coloured clothes and wear rings (*kundhals*) in her ears.
2. Captain Alexander Hamilton who was the only European to have visited Sindh during the life-time of Shah Abdul Latif has given a copious account of Thatta in 1699 in the *New Account of the East Indies*, Pinkerton's Travels, Vol. III, pp. 304-9.

    However, the earliest European contact with Sindh dates back to 1550 when the Portuguese, the pioneers in the sea-trade with the Indian ports, engaged themselves in carrying the trade at Lahri-bunder and Thatta. The East India Company's factory at Thatta was established in 1635 and closed down owing to political unrest in the country in 1662. The East India Company again entered the trade in Sindh in 1758.

Bhambhor, the city of Sasui-Punhu fame. In Thatta and Bhambhor the poet was reminded of Sohni and Sasui and their indomitable love for Mehar and Punhu, respectively.

The next place he seems to have visited was Malir. This was different from Malir in Thar, the place of Marui, the heroine of a famous Sindhi folk-tale *Umar Marui*. From Malir, he proceeded to Karachi where he saw the Kalachi whirl-pool, which had taken in the long yore the toll of six brothers of Moriro, the fisherman. The poet alludes to the deadly Kalachi whirl-pool in his "Sur Ghatu".

Shah Abdul Latif and his companions had appointed as their destination Hinglaj, a place 120 miles away to the West of Karachi, in Las Bela territory in South Baluchistan. The shrine there is dedicated to Amba Parvati or Hingula Devi, the consort of Lord Siva.[1] From Karachi, at that time a village, a duly recognised *purohit* functioning as *agowa* (guide) used to lead the large batches of pilgrims to Hinglaj. The total time occupied in such a journey would be about twenty days in as many marches. The *agowa* conducted Shah Abdul Latif and his companions through the river Habb, which for some distance formed a natural line of demarcation between Sindh and Baluchistan, to a succession of rocky and gravelly gorges in the Pabb mountains. The poet knew that Sasui of Bhambhor had crossed that difficult terrain long before him and he visualised the whole drama connected with her life re-enacted before his eyes.

In his *Risalo* he alludes to Khariro also—Khariro, the place between the Habb river and the Vindur rivulet, where tax was

1. Thornton's Gazetteer (i, p. 249) describes Hinglaj as "a celebrated place of pilgrimage for Hindoos, in consequence of being one of the fifty-one *pithas* or spots on which the dissevered limbs of Sati or Doorga were scattered".

collected from the Hindu pilgrims on behalf of the then ruler of Las Bela. Shah Abdul Latif was disappointed to learn that under the Mughal rulers the Hindus were subjected to the levy of tax on their visits to temples and gdos.

The last lap of journey to Hinglaj across the Harho mountain was arduous, too. But the recompense by way of mental peace one had in the cave of Hinglaj was immense. The visitors, as a homage, poured milk over the idol of Amba Parvati. There he came to know of, the methods of self-discipline and mind concentration and about the *kundalini chakra*, or curled up centre, in *susumna nadi*, which when awakened enabled the mystic to reach full consciousness of Him.[1] The poet refers to *Dhyana Yoga*, of course in a purely poetic or non-technical manner, when he talks of his eyes trained enough to concentrate on the Love, in the first few *baits* of the "Sur Asa" (Section II). He says:

> Should my eyes see any thing other than Him I love,
> I would pluck them out and throw them off as morsels at the crow.[2]

The Muslim custodians of the shrine, meaningfully refer to the Amba (Mother) as *Nani* (Mother or Grandmother). Shah Abdul Latif was to return to the peaceful atmosphere of Hinglaj, a second time also.

After his visit to Hinglaj he came back about half way to Karachi, upto Lahut, via Vankar, beside the Khirthar range in the North-East of Las Bela. The Khirther is the source of the Baran river, which in its course of 100 miles waters an

---

1. As early as 1325, Shaikh Nizamuddin seems to have studied the principles of *Yoga*, and another Sufi Shaikh Nasiruddin refers to Siddhas, the gurus of the Yogis and says, "A Sufi must keep an eye on his breathing, and must be able to hold his breath in order to concentrate." (see M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967, p. 165).
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Asa", II/4, p. 357.

area of 1300 square miles and falls into the Sindhu river below Kotri, the poet's home-town. The poet knew it well that after the rains in Vankar the Baran came down in great amounts of water to Kotri and brought prosperity and happiness to its inhabitants. He saw the Baran passing through the Khirthar range by a very narrow and precipitous gorge and, further on, by the rocks standing high on its very bed. The scenery was grand in its wildness.

While in Las Bela, Shah Abdul Latif heard about the benevolent king Sapar, who in the long past had bestowed a gift of hundred horses on a minstrel, though he (the minstrel) was lame physically and limpid in his musical notes. The poet allegorises the episode of Sapar Sakhi's benevolence in his "Sur Prabhati" wherein he sings to the All-Merciful God.

In his itinerary of Las Bela, Shah Abdul Latif visited Lahut, a rugged ground in the heart of the Pabb mountains. The visitors undertook the rough descent into the Lahut ground to view in one of its caves the rocky mass projected in the shape of a cow's udder or mammary glands, secreting milk drop by drop. Before the advent of Qalandar Lal Shahbaz's contemporary Shah Bilawal, with whose name is associated a *dargah* at a short distance from Lahut, this particular mountainous area of the Pabb in Baluchistan was rightly known as Gokul, the sacred Place of Cow. Later, under the influence of local leaders, Gokul's name was wiped off and the people were terrorisingly told that the very name "Gokul" on one's lips would conjure up before one's eyes a Jinn. The poet however felt gratified to have the *darsana* of Gokul and its *Kulpati*[1] and later deployed the word "Lahut", the new name for Gokul, as meaning "non-existence" in the metaphorical sense. The journey to Lahut inspired him to pay a second visit to Hinglaj.

1. *Ibid.*, "Sur Ramkali", II/Wai, p. 402

After visiting Hinglaj once more, the travellers went to Karachi, Debal Kot (of the "Leela Chanesar" folktale fame) and many other places in Lar (Lower Sindh). They met a good number of learned men at Thatta. Among them, Makhdum Mu'in (d. 1748) deserves special mention for it was he with whom Shah Abdul Latif had pretty long discussions on the nature of mystical experience. Makhdum Mu'in of Thatta was one of the principal disciples of Waliullah Shah of Delhi (c. 1702-1763), known in the annals of medieval Indian history for his attempt at the synthesis between *wahdah al-wujud* (Unity of Being) and *wahdah al-shuhud* (Apparentism or Modified Monism).

They ferried across the Sindhu at Thatta and reached Sajawal and Mughar Bhain (Mughal-bin) in the Jati *taluqa* and thence proceeded to Lakhpat (Kutch). In those days one could go in a boat across the salty marsh between Sindh and Kutch, as till then the influx of an inland sea caused by the earthquake of the 16th June 1819 had not separated completely Sindh from Kutch[1]. From Lakhpat they went to Madai or Mandwi and thence to Dwarka and Porbunder.

Shah Abdul Latif's "Sur Samundi" and "Sur Srirag" seem to be the product of his intimate acquaintance with the high sea of that time. In these "Surs" he refers to two historical facts : one about the Sindhian trade with Kathiawar, Ceylon, Bengal and the places along the entire coastline ; and the other about the *Philangi*[2] (*Frangi*/Frank) sea-pirates operating on the Arabian sea.

From Porbunder Shah Abdul Latif and his friends went to Junagadh where they learnt about Rai Diyach and his palace

1. Cf. Henry Pottinger's *Travels in Belochistan and Sinde* London, 1816, p. 374. in which an account of return journey from Sindh to Bombay via Kutch in August/September 1809 is given.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Srirag", III/13, p. 57.

at the Girnar hill. The Girnar's highest peak, *Gorakhnath Sikhar*, named after Gorakhnath, is a great rendezvous of all the Jogis. The poet sings of Gorakhnath in his "Sur Ram-kali". From there they went to Khambat or Cambay, a place between the Sabarmati and the Mahi rivers in Gujarat, ever consecrated to Lord Siva.

On their return, they went to Nangar Parkar (Thar) and saw the Karonjhar (or Kalinjar) hills. Shah Abdul Latif was particularly interesed in revisiting Malir—a place in Thar, for which Marui of the *Umar Marui* folk-tale had yearned very much when in Umarkot, and his companions had ticked the Gouri temple as a must in their Thari tinerary. They visited both the places. While in Thar, Shah Abdul Latif observed the Thari way of life so thoroughly that his "Sur Marui" seems to have been created by a man born in that region.[1] The Jogis liked the *Gurukul*-type atmosphere of the Gouri temple so much that they decided to live for a few months in the residential quarters within its precincts. But Shah Abdul Latif, before he could think of settling anywhere for a longer time, had many miles to go and, as it were, a promise to keep with Mumal of Ladano (Jaisalmer). Thus far, he had already visited the places associated with Nuri (the Hallaya hill), Sohni (Thatta), Sasui (Bhambhor and Kech Makran), Lila (Debal-kot), Sorath (Junagadh) and Marui (Malir) He now seems to have parted with the Jogis on a good understanding and resumed his journey to Jaisalmer either all alone or with a

1. Yet in the "Sur Marui" one improbability seems to have crept in. Marui says that her in-laws left Kharori village near Malir to settle down at Verhijhap a small deserted place far away from Kharori (*SJR* (KA), "Sur Marui", IX/9, p. 291). Brerumal Mehar-chand observes (in *Latifi Sair* (Second Edition), Hyderabad, p. 77) that Shah Abdul Latif makes the above reference to Verhijhap by way of his personal tribute to Paru, a Bhahman Jogi of Anjar (Kutch), who had lived there long before him and in whose memory a fair was held every year.

passing-by caravan.[1] He, however, remained a life-long admirer of the Jogis with whom he had wandered for about three years in the Greater Sindh of the ancient times. But he came across a few charlatans, too, in the garb of Jogis and was critical of their ways.[2] The *Risalo* bears a testimony to his unerring faculty of making distinction between two sets of Jogis, one *Nuri, i.e.*, the enlightened, and the other *Nari, i.e.*, the condemned to the fire of hell.[3]

* * *

On his way back to Kotri, he came across near Thatta a camel-driver who hummed with rare passion the following line :

All alone shall I now wend my way to my Love.[4]

When questioned, the camel-driver told the poet that he knew no comfort since the day he had heard the verse from some *faqirs* in Hala and had been reciting it time and again.

The verse was Shah Abdul Latif's own composition which he had sung in the past. He voluntarily recited the remaining two lines to him. The poet said :

The difficult mountain-passes stand upright as gibbets,
If the yearning for the Beloved is within me,
I have a good company.[5]

---

1. Bherumal Meharchand, *Latifi Sair*, p. 87.
2. See *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", IV/16, p. 407.
3. *Ibid.*, I/1, p. 325 . . . Narayan Shyam, a distinguished Sindhi poet of today is inclined to take these lines of the text as meaning that some of the Jogis are *Nuri*, the enlightened, like the moon, and the others are *Nari*, burning, or making light like the sun. The Jogis of the latter type enkindle others.
4. Kalyan Advani, *Shah*, Bombay, 1951, p. 29; *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sasui Abri", IX/13, p. 137.
5. *Ibid.*

The camel-driver was so much overcome with rapturous ecstasy that he fell down dead. The poet buried him there at the same spot. He used to say ever afterwards that he had nowhere seen such a man filled with yearning for God.

In Thatta, he met Makhdum Mu'in once again and their acquaintance matured into friendship. The learned Makhdum led a life of seclusion and had no connection with the kings or noblemen, whatsoever. He related to Shah Abdul Latif how Shah Abdur Rahim, father of his preceptor Shah Waliullah Dehlwi, had declined to accept a grant of land by Aurangzeb, saying in his letter to him that 'the provisions of this world are scant[1] and if he perchance gave him something out of a tiny bit he himself had received from God, there would remain hardly anything for him'. Shah Abdul Latif was reminded of his name-sake, (Shaikh) A'bdul Latif of Burhanpur (Deccan), who too had declined to accept Aurangzeb's similar offer, saying, 'The king wants to make the grant of village and thus oblige us, while God Almighty gives us daily bread without any obligation.'[2] Shah Abdul Latif says in "Sur Prabhati"

> You are the only Bestower, the rest are all humble beggars,
> Rains fall due in seasons, but You shower mercy always.[3]

Both the Makhdum and the Shah underlined, by their personal examples, the practice of the *faqirs* to keep away from the threshold of kings.

Makhdum Muhammad Mu'in was a scholar of Prophetic Traditions (Hadith), while the other learned man of Thatta Makhdum Muhammad Hashim (1692-1760) was a man of Jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Though Shah Abdul Latif met the latter also, he could not come closer to him on the plane of thought, for he (Muhmmad Hashim) did not favour the Sufi way of life.

1. The Qur'an 4 : 77.
2. Cf. Yusuf Hussain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, Bombay, 1959, p. 60.
3. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Prabhati", I/26, p. 452.

He pleaded for the strict observance of *shari'ah*, and for the unmistakable adherance to the master-servant relationship between God and man. He 'fought unceasingly against the musical parties in honour of great mystics mystics[1]'

* * *

One day, as suddenly the young man had disappeared so, suddenty he reappeared in Kotri. But what a man he was now! He had seen life in the raw and amassed vast raw materials for his poetry. He had acquired the alchemy of transmuting the dross of life into the superb and inimitable spiritual allegories. For him the travels proved to be, as it were, a gestation-period of creative effort.

His parents were overjoyed on their son's home-coming after a long absence.. Shah Habib, who had been praying to God day in and day out for his safe return, was overcome with emotion. But, for him it was a day not only of rejoicing and pouring out his fond heart, but also of arguing and questioning. A shorter man with a tendency to becoming paunchy, Shah Habib paced up and down in his room and at last decided to broach with Shah Abdul Latif the subject uppermost in his mind. Out of affection and attachment peculiar to a parent on these occasions, he scolded him for having been away in the company of Jogis and Sanyasins to feel His Presence at Hinglaj and various other places whereas God is everywhere in the universe. The *Risalo* records two *baits* representing the dialogue between the father and the son. Shah Habib's part wrought with momentary unkindness to the Jogis is given in the following *bait* :

> The place where He was, the Jogis did not visit ;
> Some bad believers among them went the long and weary ways ;
> He was here, they looked for Him at Hinglaj there.[2]

---

1. Annemarie Schimmel, "Shah Inayat Shahid of Jhok", a paper in *Liber Amicorum*, Leiden. 1969, p. 152.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", IX/25, p. 424.

Shah Abdul Latif, who had a wanderlust in the true spirit of a traveller without any ritualistic respect of a *ziarati* or a *tirtha-yatri* (pilgrim) and had, in the company of Jogis, a richly paying exercise in spirituality and a broad human experience, said to him, 'Though God is ever present in the din of the crowds, His realisation comes easy in the peaceful places like Hinglaj.'

> The Jogis looked for Him there, where also He was,
> They with the right belief in Him undertook the long journeys,
> He was here, no doubt, but they realised Him at Hinglaj.[1]

He had gone on with them because, he said...

> I, too, had from them something worth having.[2]

Sufis in general do not believe in images.[3] But some of them believed in the beauty of human objects.[4] Both can serve as stepping stones to the higher appreciation of the Absolute. Beholding the idol of Amba Parvati at Hinglaj, Shah Abdul Latif felt that man created idols in the same manner as God created men after His own image. An idol created by man looks, at the creative level, like Him and commands respect and love from him as does God from him (His own image).

Shah Abdul Latif like all other poets of the Bhakti movement did not endorse the fixed belief in the idols—the fixed

---

1. *Ibid.*, IX/26, p, 424.
2. *Ibid.*, IX/53, p. 427.
3. Sahibjani, a well-known Sufi of the 17th century performed the *puja* in the house of idols (*Dabistan*, Voll. III, p. 302). The Sindhi Sufis also eonsidered the temple and the mosque as one and the same place of God.
4. Some of the Sufi poets, for instance, Madholal Husain (1539-1593), a Panjabi Sufi poet, loved a youth, Madho by name. The Sindhi poet Bedil (1814-72) was also famous for this. The idea of loving a youth, originally Greek, was borrowed by the Muslim countries like Persia. The Indian concept, however, does no tfavour it.

belief, which shuts eyes to the inner meaning and sticks on to the externals. Shah Habib probably took Shah Abdul Latif to be a *kafir* (non-believer) for the latter had shown respect for the idol at Hinglaj. But Shah Abdul Latif saw the idols as symbols. He looked up to his father with awe and admiration, but very often would show him his own will and wisdom. He, therefore, did not acquiesce in his judgment easily and was reminded of Azazil (later, Satan) who had disobeyed the command of God by not bowing before the idol of Hadrat Adam (man) and forfeited his high position. Had he shown flexiblity of mind and done it, running contrary to the provision of *shari'ah* for a while, he would have been close to God like all other angels who had obeyed Him. Shah Abdul Latif says :

To be one with Him
Set aside the chapters of *shari'ah* and be *kafir*.[1]

What he shunned most was the rigidity of mind ond fixed belief.

* * *

Soon after the 'return of the native' in or about 1713, it so happened that some armed robbers of the Dal tribe broke into the fortress of Mirza Mughal Beg Arghun in his absence. The robbers made away with all his movable effects in the house, leaving behind the women-folk looking helplessly at the situation. On his return, the infuriated Mirza formed a reprisal party to attack the robbers in their lair. As soon as Shah Abdul Latif came to know of this, he prepared himself to help his old neighbours in distress. He offered the Mirza assistance of himself and his followers, but the Mirza rejected the offer with disdain.[2]

1. Cf. "Shah Jun Tubyun" in *Tuhf-e-Latif*, Karachi, 1958, pp. 51-52.
2. Some biographers contend on the basis of a spurious *bait* that Shah Abdul Latif, when insulted like this, cursed Mirza Mughal Beg with death in an encounter with robbers. It is unlikely in view of the altogether different tenor of Shah Abdul Latif's life and work.

The Arghun and his men were killed in the fight. One of the followers of the Sayyid took this news to him in two words : *Bud Khabith* (he was mean). God's good man, Shah Abdul Latif corrected him and said : *Yak Mughal beh budah* (he had been a good Mughal). 1124 A.H (1713 A.D.), the year of Mirza Mughal Beg's death, is abstracted according to the *Abjd* system from both the chronograms. Shah Abdul Latif did not blame Mirza Mughal Beg. He said, he was a good Mughal and lived according to his lights.

Of all the male members, only one minor child Golo was left now. The women-folk in the fortress took this great misfortune as a natural consequence of the wrongs the Arghuns had done to the Sayyids, the great spiritual people. To make amends, they offered to Shah Abdul Latif the hand of Bibi Saeeda Begum, Mirza Mughal Beg's daughter, for whom he had earlier caught a fancy.

Letting bygones be bygones, the Sayyids accepted the offer and Shah Abdul Latif was married to her.

* * *

Saeeda Begum was a pious young lady. The disciples of Shah Abdul Latif would call her *Taj al-Mukhaddarat*, Crown of the Chaste Ones. Kalyan Advani has aptly applied to her Sa'di's famous lines :

> A woman that is good, loyal and chaste
> Can make a monarch of her beggar-mate.[1]

Like his father, Shah Abdul Latif used to remain in *otaro* or men's parlour, in the company of his associates and disciples. Saeeda Begum happily took upon herself the responsi-

---

1. Kalyan Advani, *Shah*, p. 32. Translation of Sa'di's lines by L. H. Ajwani in *History of Sindhi Literature*, p. 84.

bility of running the household and she relieved her husband of the mundane jobs for he was obviously meant for higher pursuits. It was really wonderful of her that she put up cheerfully with his independent and restless nature.

On his part, Shah Abdul Latif looked after his wife with tender care. She had a miscarriage once and never conceived again.[1] The poet, though it was customary with the Muslims (and not disallowed then among the Hindus), did not marry again. He left through him no issue to carry on his race. "My disciples," he said, "are my childern." He remembered what the Qur'an said, "Fair in the eyes of man is the love of things they covet, women and childern, hoards of gold and silver, horses branded (for blood excellence) ; and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life ; but nearness to God is the best of the goals (to aim at)."[2] He knew that Qur'an did not mean thereby that man should flee from the worldly ways. But man must use the world according to the good pleasure of God. There should be, as the Geeta teaches us, renunciation *in* action and not renunciation *of* action.

A well-built, distinguished-looking, beared man of middle

1. To account for the childlessness, the oral tradition hagiologised Shah Abdul Latif in a story which Dayaram Gidumal gave in his book *Something About Sind* (p. 42) and the later writers recounted in their works on the poet. Dayaram Gidumal says : "It is said that the Shah's wife while *enceinte* longed one day for a certain kind of fish and her maid sent one of his followers to procure it. The Shah happened to enquire about this follower and learning the cause of his absence observed : 'When the embryo is such a trouble to my faqirs, what will the full-blown adult be ? May such a blossom be nipped in the bud." The child, we are told, in consequence was still-born to the great grief of the mother, and the Shah left no heir surviving him."
2. The Qur'an, : 14.

stature, Shah Abdul Latif was an extremely abstemious person. He believed not only in the wholesome and creative value of *brahmacharya* in the married life,[1] but also in the virtue of keeping away from alcohol (in any case, it is unlawful for the Muslims) or tobacco. He drew to him many people from far and wide and felt a deep human concern for the problems they faced in their day-to-day life. He appealed to the rich to acquire the riches lawfully and spend them in the name of God, and to the poor to accept, if helpless, the money from the rich without greed and never cease to perform the appointed jobs, when thus helped in the name of God. The goods and chattels of the world are short-lived and scanty. Then why amass them, he would tell the rich, through unsocial means ? He cracks down on the profiteers and hoarders in his "Sur Sarang".[2]

He commended the *dhikr*, or rememberance of God, to his followers for it surely helped them in negating the plurality of worldly forms and reaching the *ekata* or *tauhid* (Unity of Being) and thus getting relief from afflictions of the world. But he was against the type of *dhikr* in which the heart was not set and the mind loitered among the objects.

He himself had once realised the futility of merely counting the beads of his rosary. One day he was sitting all alone, upon a banyan tree, remembering God's name. He saw two maids with pitchers full of water on their heads coming to take rest under the tree. One asked the other, "How many times have you met your love ?" The other replied, "When one meets the lover, one is forgetful of everything including the inconsequential number of meetings." Shah Abdul Latif realised that counting the beads was a ritual only, for his mind then was not concentrated on Him.

---

1. Cf. T.L. Vaswani, *Desert Voices*, Madras, 1922, p. 45.
2. See *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sarang", I/24, p. 344 and IV/16, p. 352.

The lessons to his *murids* were always based on a thorough grasp of ethical systems as also of the life around him. He did not prescribe anything to his followers which he himself failed to practise. With his large following of people, Shah Abdul Latif, Saeeda Begum's beggar (*faqir*)-mate was really a monarch (*Shah*).

* * *

Shah Abdul Latif, who in his young days was profoundly influenced by Shah Inat of Nasarpur (d. circa 1712) and his mystical poetry, had come to have in the prime of his youth a deep regard for Shah Inayat of Jhok (1656-1718) and his social ideas. A Sufi in action, Shah Inayat of Jhok was opposed to Zamindars on the one hand and the orthodox theologians on the other. He refused to pay taxes to the government on the ground that the land occupied by him and his followers had been given free of tax to his ancestors. Because the people came in large numbers to Jhok for his spiritual guidance and settle down there on his land distributed to them free, many Zamindars lost tenants and workers of their fields, and the Sayyids of Bulri lost their followers. Both the Zamindars and the Sayyids, therefore, saw in him a threat to their affluence and influence respectively. The orthodox theologians had already declared him a heretic. At that time Makhdum Mu'in, Shah Abdul Latif's friend, was the only learned man of Thatta who shared Shah Inayat's belief in *advaita* or *hama ost* ('Everything is He') with all enthusiasm and zeal.

Farrukh Siyar, who ruled over Delhi from 1712 to 1719 and was the fifth ruler after the death of Aurangzeb, gave his assent to the Governor of Thatta, Azam Khan, to collect troops against Shah Inayat. Shah Inayat himself did not fear death but he wanted to save his followers from falling into the enemy's hand. So he resisted the governmental army for nearly four months in Jhok. All the king's men and all the king's horses could not frighten him. After that, when he

went to Yar Muhammad, the Commander, to sign a treaty, he was duped, arrested and brought before Azam Khan in Thatta. Shah Inayat was beheaded there on January 7, 1718. Farrukh-Siyar who had been installed in kingship with the help of two Sayyid brothers was assassinated by them for his misguided order of Shah Inayat's execution. The Sayyid brothers had become the followers of Shah Inayat of Jhok when he had lived in Delhi for some time.

Though not a great scholar or a poet himself, Shah Inayat enjoyed a top-ranking influence on many scholars and poets, major ones among them being Makhdum Muhammad Mu'in who wrote, among others, a scholarly book on Prophetic Traditions *Dirasat-ul-labib fi l-uswatul-hasana bi l-habib*, and Shah Abdul Latif, whose poetry came to be known as the *Shah-Jo-Risalo*.

Shah Abdul Latif was about 29, when Shah Inayat was executed. The poet sang seven verses of the "Sur Ramkali", woefully mourning the death of the great Sufi.[1] He did not take his name in the *marthia* (elegy) of seven *baits*. A singer of the old folk-tales and a narrator of the contemporary ills and sorrows through them, Shah Abdul Latif let the contemporary history pass through the crucible of his mind and did not refer to the historical events in a direct way. Though devoid of any straight reference to his times, his poerty besides being perennial in its value is precisely adjusted to focus the contemporary mind and art. What Shah Inayat endeavoured to Po with the doctrine of *advaita* or *hama ost* in the fields of individual liberty and social equality, Shah Abdul Latif unconcicusly did in the art form. In the social democracy of the *Risalo*, there exist the big zamindars and rajas like Umar, Punhu, Chanesar, Izzat Beg (Mehar) and Tamachi side by side with the poor and lowly Marui, Sasui, Kaunru (as a maid-

1. See *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali"; VIII/7-13, pp. 419-20

servant), Sohni and Nuri respectively till they finally resolve into placid social parity and unique spiritual unity. Shah Abdul Latif comprehended the contemporary society through his perception and feeling and revealed much more about it in his *kalam* than what a social historian would ordinarily do.

* * *

Though every nation is certainly the most original in its own way and we try in vain to discover similarities and affinities with others elsewhere, India with her privileged classes of priests and barons in the 18th century was not much dissimilar from any European country. In India, too, persecution in the name of religion and exploitation of the labour class by the landed aristocracy presented the same picture. Yet the flow of life here was quite placid, mysticism being the undercurrent of its character. From time to time, social reformers and saints/Sufis threw pebbles into its still waters to save it from becoming putrid. Though Shah Abdul Latif himself belonged to the religious class of the Sayyids, he was not like a common priest. A man of very few needs and a small family he led his life, as it were, in a commune. His followers would till the land, tend the cows, bullocks, goats and sheep and run the common kitchen. The old and infirm were not neglected in isolation; they lived happily with the young and the active. Shah Abdul Latif, like his father, supervised and co-ordinated the various activities in his big and sprawling *Haweli* and looked after the physical and spiritual needs of the entire flock. Since he was primarily a poet and his skills were poetic, he served the community by saying or singing all that he felt and thought. If the visiting people voluntarily brought gifts in cash or kind, these were accepted as the trustees would accept offerings, which were given away later on to the poor and the needy. He hated to possess anything, for the things we possess tend to possess us.

He had seen in his life such men also, as would avoid

living in houses, possess nothing by way of property and have no relatives in the common sense of the term. When he was thirty, he had in the month of Ramdan walked for two days to reach Bukera village and be there in the privileged company of a Qalandar, Qaimuddin by name. On reaching the usual point in open space where the Qalandar spent most of his time in the village, he saw him seated on a broken cot. The Qalandars are said to pay little or no heed to the obligatory things like saying prayers and they command a rightful place among the Sufis for they have unswerving faith in *advaita* or *wahdah al-wujud*. Shah Abdul Latif, at his command, stayed with him for the entire month of Ramdan. The two had much in common to share with each other.

Shah Abdul Latif, while observing various individuals and their varied ways, was never satisfied with working in a limited sphere and sought to face the whole range of individual and collective life which would have to be faced for creating a new society. He did not live, for that matter no poet worth the name, would live, in a vacuum. He sensitively described in his *kalam* the conditions in which the people from various walks of life lived in those days. The fisher-folk, the nomadic goatherds and the farmers are realistically depicted in their social and cultural setting in his "Sur Kamod", "Sur Marui" and "Sur Sarang". We learn much through his *Risalo* about the different kinds of birds, the camel races as also about the daily life in the essentially rural Sindh of his times. How one earned one's livelihood and what were the social mores or the essential vital customs according to which one lived then, all that is drawn by him with sympathy and precision.

Shah Abdul Latif found in Umar a typical chieftain of his times who tried to molest the poor little village-maids, and he satirised his injustice through Marui, locked as she was in his two-storey building at Umarkot :

Neither Marui washes her hair, nor smiles, nor eats,
She sings for ever the injustice of Umar's wild ways,
O Chief ! The wrong which you have done to me
will boomerang on you.[1]

The way the poet contrasted the lot of the have-nots dwelling in dirt and dust of huts and cottages with that o the haves living lavishly in big houses and palaces make a revealing reading of his socio-political awareness. On the one hand he met Marui and her lowly friends in Malir and on the other he saw in Ladano :

The golden damsels in the palaces gambled playfully with silver,
Their chambers smelt aroma of the aloe
And their bedsteads fragrance of the musk.[2]

Shah Abdul Latif, a late participator in the *Bhakti* movement, awakened the masses to their real nature and was an unsparing critic of the orthodox Mulla and the rigid Pandit alike. He said to them :

Iman or faith consists not in that you recite holy maxims
And your heart hides deceit, duality and devil.
Islamic outwardly, you have idolatry inside.[3]

x x x

If true to your faith, why you be called 'unfaithful' ?
You are never a Hindu, should you trust only
The vermilian on your forehead
and the sacred thread on your body.[4]

His philosophy never lost touch with the humanity at large. He was always concerned with showing how the dogmatic authority, whether of the priest or of the commissar, had been and still was a major obstacle to human progress. Far away from the tyranny of the orthodox religionists, big barons and

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Marui", IV/3, p. 276.
2. *Ibid.*, "Sur Mumal Rano", III/3, p. 249.
3. *Ibid.*, "Sur Asa", IV/14. p. 365.
4. *Ibid.*, IV/15, p. 365.

small rulers, the people felt happier and safer when he was with them—he, who no doubt soared upward, towards the heavens, with his longing for the Love and search for the Knowledge, but yet was of the earth, earthy, in his sympathy and compassion for the suffering mankind.

* * *

The 'monarch' (*Shah*) whom the people loved and respected so much roused jealousy in the ruler of Sindh. Nur Muhammad Kalhoro, who was struggling for complete independence from the Delhi yoke, saw a political danger inside Sindh in the evergrowing number of Shah Abdul Latif's followers. Though his heart was filled with the traditional reverence for the Sayyids in general, the Kalhoro ruler would not tolerate this particular Sayyid, Shah Abdul Latif. The hitherto mutual accommodation and good-will between the temporal and religious authorities now gave way under the pressure of jealousy wrought up by the mighty influence that Shah Abdul Latif wielded over the popular mind.

Of the total 41 Governors[1] installed in Thatta to run the Mughal administration in Sindh, Nur Muhammad Kalhoro was the last to be appointed by the Mughals in 1736. With

1. *Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai*, a commemoration volume issued by the Directorate of Pakistan, 1953, pp. 78-9, says: At the time of the poet's birth, Nawab Abu Nasrat Khan was in the gubernatorial office. He was the twenty-first Governor in the list. The names of the remaining twenty Governors are as follows: Nawab Hafizullah Khan (1691-1700), Khanzada Khan (1701), Nawab Mir Aminuddin Khan Hussain (1702), Nawab Yusuf Khan (1703), Nawab Ahmed Yar Khan (1703-1706), Nawab Atar Khan (1707), Nawab Maheen Khan (1709), Nawab Shakir Khan (1711), Nawab Maheen Khan (1712), Nawab Khwaja Muhammad Khan (1712), Nawab Atar Khan (1713), Mir Lutf Ali Khan (1713-1715), Nawab Azam Khan (1714-1718 in whose days Shah Inayat of Jhok was executed), Nawab Mahabat Khan (1719-1722), Sultan Mahmud Khan (1723), Nawab Saifullah Khan (1724-1730), Nawab Diler Dil Khan (1733), Nawab Himmat Diler Dil Khan (1733-1736). Nawab Sadiq Ali Khan (1736-1737), Nur Muhammad Kalhoro (1737-1755) (sic) (The years are not reliable !)

him came the *de facto* end of Mughal rule in Sindh. A fearless ruler, he acknowledged the *de jure* authority of Delhi only hesitatingly. The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 (when Shah Abdul Latif was 18) had brought the gradual fall of the Mughal Empire and the political breakdown was felt all over the country. Sindh among other provinces recognised the Delhi authority, only in name.

Supported by the hostile attitude of the orthodox Sayyids of Bulri towards their unorthodox relative, Sayyid Shah Abdul Latif, Nur Muhammad Kalhoro tried his best to repress him. But the Sufi poet continued with his effort in the realm of unorthodox and independent thought. This further incensed the Kalhoro to do away with him. Since the open killing would have roused the fury of his followers, he planned to get him wiped out of existence quietly in entangling him in some accident.

Shah Abdul Latif had gone to Multan to get the famed flowery tiles to decorate the tomb of his great-great grandfather, Shah Abdul Karim. On his return he met the throngs of people who had converged at Khudabad to see him, Nur Muhammad Kalhoro sent him a casket, said to contain a rich nourishment for him. On receiving the gift, the Sufi poet consigned it to the river, saying, "Let the entire creation know its worth." The poison in the reportedly nourishing confection made itself known when the fishes came to the surface of the water, dying for breath in the pure element. He took the fishes by his hand and cast them in a potful of water, where they survived to the utter astonishment of the people.

On another occasion, Nur Muhammad tried to debase the Sufi poet and made him appear as a bad man. With that motive, he invited him to a dinner where he (Shah Abdul Latif) and a beautiful dancing girl were led to a lonely room and locked inside it. When later on the host entered the room,

he was astounded to find that Shah Adbul Latif was not distracted at all by the physical charm of the dancer. The poet said to him :

> The tangle of illusion ensnares not the Yogis,
> No possessions can ever tempt them ;
> Even if the dancing girls try,
> The Yogis will pass unscathed [1]

On yet another occasion, Nur Muhammad gave him an unruly horse to ride. But Shah Abdul Latif rode it very safely. Now, Nur Muhammad began to see it clearly that nature's course was immune to the man's manoeuvred accelerations. It went its own way. He rightly noticed that the people were drawn to him even as naturally as iron is to the magnet and became his followers, though he was averse to making them as such. Like all other people, Nur Muhammad also offered himself to be his follower. True to his wont, Shah Abdul Latif let fall into oblivion the past unpleasant associations with him and readily accepted him as his disciple. Not only this, he gave him blessings that an illustrious son wouldbe born to him. Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, Nur Muhammad's son, was really greater than his father, as history tells us. During his regime, he forced the nawabs and rulers of the adjoining Las Bela, Kelat, Kutch and Jaisalmer states into submissson and accepted yearly tributes from them. Shah Abdul Latif's dream was realised during Ghulam Shah's days in so far as the parts of Sindh where Sindhi (*Vicholi*) and its various dialects, *viz.*, Lasi, Kutchi, Lari, Siraiki and Thari were spoken formed one unified region, and as Sindhi increasingly replaced Persian, the language of the elite in Sindh, and got its due place in its homeland.

Nur Muhammad remained grateful to the Sufi poet ever afterwards. He presented to him a golden-lettered attactive

---

1. Cf. Krishna Kripalani, *Faith and Frivolity*, New Delhi, 1962, p. 69.

manuscript copy of Rumi's *Mathnawi* which he (the Sufi poet) treasured all his life.[1] The Qur'an and Shah Abdul Karim's *baits* were the other two books which were always in his hands.[2]

* * *

After the 1739 sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah and furher weakening of the Mughal Empire, Nur Muhammad Kalhoro felt no fear of Delhi and, in fact, even prepared himself to oppose the despoiler of Delhi in Sindh, on his way back from Delhi to Persia. But he paid heavily for his miscalculated move, for Nadir Shah shut him up in the fort of Umarkot and would not free him until and unless he promised to pay him a tribute of twenty lakhs of rupees. Nadir Shah turned Sindh into a feudatory of the Persian Kingdom. He left an agent of his at Thatta. Later, when he was succeeded by Ahmad Shah, Nur Muhammad saw in the transfer of power a possible chance to terminate the ill-famed Agency and shake off the foreign dominance altogether. This he could not do, for Ahmad Shah also came upon him with heavy hand in one of his invasions of India, the first of which occurred in 1748.

The new situation gave a little setback to the much-advanced hope in the Kalhoro age of the unfettered development of Sindhi language, literature and culture. Sindh which had suffered many reversals at the hands of the foreign invaders and the consequent retrogress in the field of literature and culture was subjugated again to an alien power. Nur Muhammad in his Umarkot prison reminds us of Marui locked in the same fort long long ago and of her deep love for

---

1. This further contradicts the erroneous view held by some scholars that Shah Abdul Latif was an illiterate person. Had he been one, Nur Muhammad Kalhoro, his disciple, would not have presented a copy of Rumi's *Mathnawi* to him and it would not have been in his hands always.
2. Cf. Lilarm Watanmal, *Shah Latif*, p. 11.

her own land and people. Shah Abdul Latif's anguished heart also expressed itself in Sasui's love for the people speaking her own language ; she was deceived by Punhu's brothers, her brothers-in law, who spoke a forign tongue which she did not follow.[1] But where the temporal authority errs a little and fails to safeguard fully the interest of the soil, the poets and writers of the age comprehend the situation much better. In Shah Abdul Latif's poetry we find the aspirations of the age fully realised and the Sindhi way of life and the Sindhi language at their zenith. However, he was for a better deal for Sindh, his patriotism was not narrow nationalism. He uttered the famous benediction on Sindh and all humanity :

> O Lord ! may Sindh be ever prosperous and happy ;
> My Sweet Friend! may You make the entire world full of cheer ![2]

* * *

Some years after this, in 1742, Shah Abdul Latif felt a strong urge to enter the third part of his life, i e., lead a life of peaceful seclusion. He had successful innings in the first two parts of his life in which he became known to the best poets and scholars of his day and was highly esteemed by the then rulers.

During the course of his wanderings he had come upon a *bhit*, a mound of sand, near the Kirar lake. The view around it had pleased him and the place seemed fitting for meditation and contemplation. It is said that Shah Abdul Karim, his great-great grandfather, had once passed by that mound near Hala. Shah Abdul Latif along with some of his followers founded a village set in the beautiful scenery of the

---

1. Cf. Din Muhammad Wafai, *Shah Je Risale Jo Mutalio*, Karachi, 1962, p. 7.
2. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Sarang", IV/12, p. 351.

Bhit, building there a few humble cottages. He constructed a small *haweli* for his parents also. But, as the destiny would have it, his father Shah Habib was not to live in it. While the Sufi poet was still busy plastering the sand mound with the famous Sindh clay, he received a word from his father, who was now old and infirm. The message ran as under :

> I look for you, but you don't return ;
> My beloved son, do now while I live what you shall do after I die.[1]

Shah Abdul Latif who loved his father very much and showed reverence to him as a *murid* does to his *murshid* was deeply touched by the message. He felt that he would not bear the sight of his dying father and might break his vow of 'no grief at any loss', if he saw him in that condition. So, he sent back the same messenger with the following message :

> Feel no grief, for I am not really far away from you ;
> Though physically away from each other,
> We both are bound for the same end.[2]

Shah Habib felt solace and comfort over his message and died in peace before his son could reach his physical presence. He crossed the bridge of death and met the Friend in 1155 A.H. (1742 A.D.).[3]

After his death, Shah Abdul Latif took the entire family to Bhit. Shah Habib was buried there.

* * *

1. *Ibid.*, "Sur Husaini", X/23, Pp. 223-24.
2. *Ibid.*, X/24, p. 224.
3. The year of Shah Habib's death 1155 A.H. is obtained from the following Arabic chronogram inscribed by Muhammad Sadiq Naqshbandi, one of the disciples of Shah Abdul Latif :

   almautu jisrun yusalul habib li liqa'il Habib.

   meaning that 'Death is a bridge, crossing which a friend meets the Friend'.

The village of Bhit had diverse surroundings. With the Kirar lake and the Pahar canal nearby, Bhit had green belts which seemed almost to writhe in the fire of the sun and bathe in the Kirar lake by night. Loneliness was the character of this landscape. There was no plurality even of the objects of the eye : one and only one mound, one and only one small mosque and one and only one line of cottages pointing towards one Allah. People from far and wide would visit Bhit to pay homage to the Sufi poet. The melancholy silence which enveloped it was occasionally broken by a hearty *Allahu* during the *sama*', or mystic dance, at night.

Lovers of music and song from all parts of India visited Bhit. Some one would play on harp, the other would sing solo, or with others in a chorus, differently on different occasions. Two of his men—Atal and Chanchal—were master musicians who had come from Delhi.

Shah Abdul Latif led a very simple and austere life. He used to wear a jogi garment and eat and drink in a *kishta* or *kashkol* (bowl of gourd). It is said, he never asked any of his disciples to give him from the pitcher water to drink, because that also meant believing in the two-ness of the high and the low, the master and the servant.

Once a disciple of his, who used to visit him every year, did not come when expected. Shah Abdul Latif felt pangs of separation. When he saw him after two years, the Sufi poet asked him why he had abstained from his customary visit to Bhit. He replied, "Last year. I could not afford to buy a blanket I bring every year here as a devotee's gift for the *murshid*; hence I felt ashamed to appear before you, empty-handed." Shah Abdul Latif with his eyes wet with the mist of divine tenderness said, "Woollen coverlets you bring here every year go to your poor brethren. It's all right, if you were not in a position to help a poor brother last year...A

blanket that may bridge a gap between a have and a have-not should not have been, by its absence, a cause for separating a friend from his friend."

It was not long after the village of Bhit had come up that an ex-soldier of Nadir Shah's army[1] that had looted Delhi and slaughtered many innocent men, women and children there, appeared on the quiet scene of Bhit. Darkness had begun to spread its wings over the sandy environs and a new light appeared in his subdued and sad eyes.

He came up before Shah Abdul Latif and told him the woeful story of his wanderings upto Medina in the hope that his sin of killing an innocent *dervesh* in the 1739 sack of Delhi would be forgiven. He further told of the Medina *dargah* where he was told that since his sin was great, he should present himself before the great noble being of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif, and get peace of mind in his sublime company. Shah Abdul Latif consoled him by saying that he who repented at heart over his misdeed was always forgiven by the All-Merciful and the *dervesh* whom he had beheaded had reached the re-union with God and bore no ill will against him. The healing words moved the ex-soldier to tears, and he slept peacefully that night for the first time in many years. When he woke up at dawn and went out, he saw the sun rising in the East and thought it was perhaps in that vast landscape that Creation had begun. The ex-soldier, then, inhaled deep the ozone with one breath and, as it were, the sweet aroma of *ananda* or joy with the next. He lifted up his eyes and said : No, I am not a miserable sinner; now I am a being, who, by a long and arduous journey, have come to know how to live in freedom and joy, how to live at peace with myself and with all creation.

1. Cf. Lutf Allah Badwi, "Bhitai ain Bedil", an article in *Naeen Zindagi* (Latif Number), Karachi, May, 1968, pp. 17-20, based on Qadir Bux Bedil's *Panja Ganja.*

Such was the personality of the Sufi poet ! And the new, breathing appeal it had !

* *

Though given to a life of seclusion as a religious discipline, as it allowed him more time for concentrated thought, Shah Abdul Latif did not stand aloof and remote from the society. He was fond of meeting his friends and associates and discussing with them the issues of wide social and spiritual interests. If that were not so, how could one explain his broad human interest, as is evident from the *Risalo* ? The doctrine of *advaita* or *wahdah al-wujud* is politically opposed to the theocratic society, and socially uninclined to the differentiation of individuals on grounds of wealth and heredity. He would sometimes leave Bhit to go and meet diverse people at their respective places.

Once he went to meet Khwaja Muhammad Zaman (of the Lawari village) (1713-1774) who had received the academic instruction from one of his (Shah Abdul Latif's) disciples, Muhammad Sadiq Naqshbandi. It may be recalled here that Muhammad Sadiq was the person who had filed the year of Shah Habib's death (1742) in an Arabic chronogram. It was characteristic of the aged Sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif to have set out on a journey to seek a meeting with the disciple of his disciple.

On reaching Khwaja Muhammad Zaman Lawari's *hujra*, or chamber, Shah Abdul Latif sent his man inside to take his permission for meeting him. The man came back and said to the Shah, "He said that he himself would come in a moment or two to accord a hearty welcome to you."[1]

---

1. This account of Shah Abdal Latif's visit to the Lawari Sufi is based on the one given in Introduction to the *Abyat-e-Sindi*, ed. by Dr. U.M. Daudpota, Karachi, 1939.

Shah Abdul Latif asked him, 'What was the Khwaja Saheb doing ?

The man replied, "He was engaged in *dhikr*."

Shah Abdul Latif said to him, "He who was in communion with God would hardly remember what you said unto him a little while ago. Let us go in."

On seeing the Khwaja, the Shah said the following *bait* :

They went a well-laid journey.
I cannot live without the holy men, whose heads are hung low (in *dhikr*).

The Khwaja replied :

When nothing, you be nothing and earn the 'nothing'.
Live in "Nought but God" and give up all relationships,
The holy men will tell you then about the secret of Love.

The Shah said :

Not able to meet the Beloved, I try and try ;
Before whom should I cry that He treated me thus ?

The Khwaja replied :

Go and sit in the company of those, who, erasing the old,
Inscribe the new disposition and destiny
And make you turn a leaf in which you shall behold Him.

After this exchange of *baits*, Shah Abdul Latif enquired of him whether there was anything meaningful beyond the *fana*, or the annihilation of the individual self. With a far-away look in his eyes the Khwaja said, "Is there anything substantial *before* it ?" He did not dilate on it and left Shah Abdul Latif there to figure out its meaning himself that before the *fana* the individual self is bound by the limits of *nama* (name) and *rupa* (form). On this, Shah Abdul Latif evinced a great interest of becoming his *murid*.

The Khwaja told him that the *sama'*, the mystic dance, was prohibited in his *tariqah* except on a few permissible occasions. It was quite difficult for Shah Abdul Latif to keep away from it. To him there was no difference between *dhikr* and the *sama'*. His great-great grandfather, Shah Abdul Karim also had a great liking for it. Shah Abdul Karim had once said, "Some people engaged themselves in reading books and some in other occupations. I learnt the *sama'* only and did not care for any other engagement."[1]

And they had a hearty discourse on mystic discipline. Though a strict follower of the *shari'ah* and also of the Naqshbandi Order, the Khwaja strongly believed in *wahdah-al-wujud*. His poetry like that of Shah Abdul Latif pulsated with the doctrine of Unity of Being. He told him that his poetry and beliefs had not found favour with the influential Makhdum Muhammad Hashim of Thatta and he, therefore, had to shift from Thatta to Lawari.

Shah Abdul Latif returned home very much satisfied with the meeting. He held the Lawari Sufi in high esteem and whenever there was any mention of him, he would recite the following *bait* in his honour :

> I saw such men, O, mother, as had met the Beloved face to face,
> I grope for words to recount their ever-glorious tale.[2]

Sahebdino of Daraz (1689-1788) was another *faqir* with whom Shah Abdul Latif had colloquies. On his first visit to him, he met Sahebdino in a grove of the mustard trees, hidden away, as he thought, from the crowds. Shah Abdul Latif said to him, "Why keep the Beloved behind a veil? Let Him be viewed by all." The hiding *dervesh* of Daraz staged

1. Cf. Memon Abdul Majid Sindhi, *Karim Jo Kalam*, the *Malfuzat* section, p. 120.
2. See *SJR*(KA), "Sur Khahori", I/2, p. 377.

back from indifference to the world of action, filled with yen to seeit in its face.

On his second visit, Shah Abdul Latif was much impressed by Sahebdino's 5-year-old grandson Sachal. He read the greatness of the boy writ large on his face and remarked, "He will take the lid off the kettle (of the Knowledge) I have set to boil." What the Shah foretold at that time came out to be true. The grown-up Sachal (1739-1827) did plain-speaking in his poetry most of the time and laid bare open what Shah Abdul Latif had couched and covered in the extended metaphors of folk-tales. This gave him, after Shah Abdul Latif, the second place in the literary history of Sindh.

Mian Isa, Makhdum Din Muhammad of Sewhan and Makhdum Abdul Rahim Grohri were some of his prominent conteporaries. Mian Isa (died c. 1742) was of his father's age and had foreseen a great spiritual future for Shah Abdul Latif when the boy was only six.[1] That his two or three *baits* were interpolated in the early manuscripts of the *Shah-Jo-Risalo* shows that Shah Abdul Latif used to sing his poetry very often. Makhdum Din Muhammad was so intimate with the Sufi poet that they once exchanged their *dastars*, or 'turbans', in token of their close friendship. Makhdum Abdul Rahim Grohri (1739-1778; called 'the Grohri' for he belonged to Grohri village of Samaro *taluqa*) was one of the disciples of Muhammad Zaman Lawari and a distinguished Sindhi poet in his own right. He was against the ignorant fanatics and dishonest charlatans and gave his life in a fight against a fake Jogi of Tharparkar.

Tamar, Mahmud, Varu or Vigandh, Madan Bhagat, Mian Hashim Alawi Rehanpota were some of the main *faqirs* of the

---

1. Cf. "Miyon Isa", an article by Dr. U.M. Daudpota in *Naeen Zindagi*. Karachi, January—1952, pp. 9-10.

Shah Abdul Latif *haweli.* Tamar was his Chief Khalifa and his descendants have been the *mujawirs* of the Sufi poet's shrine to this day. Mahmud, once a member of an aristocratic family, had renounced the riches to become his *faqir.* Shah Abdul Latif gave him so much affectionate regard that he willed that he should be buried by his feet. Varu or Vigandh *faqir* of Kotri was lame, untidy and gluttonous. It is said that the Sufi poet cracked jokes with him very often. In the concluding verses of the "Sur Bilawal"[1], the Sufi poet desribes him humorously and advises him in an indirect way to acquire the good habits of keeping clean and eating sparingly. Besides Varu, Madan was another Hindu *faqir* of Kotri with whom he kept company. Madan knew Yoga also. Mian Hashim Alawi Rehanpota, Chief of his amanuenses, inscribed everything Shah Abdul Latif sang in the state of *wajd*, or trance.[2] He used to sing his *murshid*'s *kalam* in his rich, sonorous voice.

* * *

During the times of Shah Abdul Latif, the great bulk of Muslim populace professed the Sunni creed, but a considerable proportion of the Mughals, Kalhoras and some Sayyids and Baluchis were Shi'as. Fatima, the Prophet's only surviving

1. Cf. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Bilawal", IV/1-13, pp. 476-77.
2. One of the misconceptions about Shah Abdul Latif is that he, towards the end of his life, consigned his *kalam* inscribed by Mian Hashim Alawi Rehanpota and other amanuenses in the *Risalo* to the Kirar lake for fear of his words being misunderstood or misinterpreted, and further, that he, on the request of his followers, got the *Risalo* prepared again with the help of a lady, Niamat by name, who remembered it by heart. The *Risalo*, thus prepared, it is believed, came to be called *Ganj* and was handed over to Tamar *faqir*, his Chief Khalifa, whose descendants have it in their custody to this day. It is highly fallacious to think that the Sufi poet who sang Truth would destory his *Risalo* (literally, *The Messoge*) himself. Truth is never made to die, nor can it die.

daughter ; Ali, his first cousin and son-in law ; Hasan and Husain, his two well-loved grandsons through Fatima are regarded by the Shi'as as the only group of four persons worthy of love and reverence after the death of the Prophet, the first of the Five. Since they ignore all other associates of the Prophet, their attitude arouses resentment in the Sunni majority.

The Qur'an recommends to its followers that respect should be shown to all castes and creeds (6 : 108) and Shah Abdul Latif, true to the Quranic injunction, rose above all barriers. When once asked whether he was Shi'a or a Sunni, he said, "Betwixt both." When it was put before him that between the Shi'as and the Sunnis there was nothing, he said, "And I am nothing." The man who realised this "nothingness" had in him that cosmic consciousness which made him the Sufi poet of all people and of all times.

Outwardly, Shah Abdul Latif belonged to the Shi'a sect of Islam. It is evidenced by the fact that in the last years of his life he made an attempt to make a pilgrimage to Karbala rather than to Mecca. When he had covered a little distance from Wang Wilasar (Kutch), a pious man greeted him and said to him with all humility : "Sire, you have been telling people that Bhit will be your burial place ; it is therefore surprising that you choose to make journey to Karbala now at this age."

Evidently on the advice of that pious man, Shah Abdul Latif retraced his steps to Bhit There he staisfied himself by composing "Sur Kedaro" commemorating the massacre and martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet and his family and friends at Karbala in 680 A.D.—some 50 years after the Prophet's death. This tragedy at Karbala has been a subject of many a dirge and drama and its commemoration is one of the outstanding events in the lunar calendar of Islam—next in importance to the Hajj and the Ramdan. Shah

Abdul Latif, like many others of this land, knew Husain's love for Hind or India. It is said Husain had expressed his desire to leave the then Iraqian world of turmoil and live in peace here in India.

* * *

The circumstances attending the Sufi poet's passing away would move anyone. Abandoning the idea of visiting Karbala, the Sufi poet returned to Bhit. He wore a black, sombre garment and went into a solitary chamber. He remained there for twenty days together and took occasionally a few morsels of food. On the morning of the tewenty-first day, he came out and took a bath. Then he lay down and pulled a sheet over himself. He asked his *faqirs* to play music and sing songs. There was music and song for three days and lo ! "Latif, the Lord, was absorbed in Love."[1] Thus he passed into the eternity very quietly. What a beautiful poetry in that death ! He had many friends in life and many witnesses to his death.

* * *

Shah Abdul Latif died on the 14th of Safar 1165 A.H. (1752 A.D.) and his earthly remains were laid at rest according to his own will, by the feet of Mahmud Shah. The 14th Safar is the date on which the annual fair in the sacred memory of the Sufi poet is held around his mausoleum at Bhit. The mausoleum contains the tombs of Shah Abdul Latif and his immediate successor Sayyid Jamal Shah. Jamal Shah, with the money donated by the Sindh ruler, Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, built the mausoleum over Shah Abdul Latif's impressive

---

1. English translation of the following line of the chronogram inscribed above the door of Shah Abdul Latif's mausoleum :
   gardidah mahwe Ishq wajude Latif Mir.
   The chronogram was composed by Muhammad Panah of Thatta.

tomb in 1754. One of the inscriptions over its door says that its construction by Idan, a well-known mason of the times, was complete within two years of the Sufi poet's death. The two inscriptions in Persian over the door of the mausoleum and on a wall of the mosque to its North show, according to the *Abjd* system of calculation, the year of his death as 1165 A.H. (1752 A.D.)[1].

Shah Abdul Latif's mausoleum is a place of pilgrimage for all people from all walks of life. To the ignorant masses Shah Abdul Latif is a patron saint of their secular affairs and a spiritual guide in the turmoil of life. The educated go to him in search of a universal mind. There the faithful look for the fire which has emitted the smoke of this worldly existence and the skeptics feel that if it is possible that God should exist, then in that case, He must exist there.

* * *

In sum, Shah Abdul Latif led the simple and meaningful life of a Bhakti-movement poet. The *Tuhfat al-Kiram* referred to him as an *ummi.* Since then the word "ummi" has been usually translated as "an illiterate person" by the Sindhi biographers. The antonym of *ahl al-Kitab,* or a man of Law given by God, it (the word "ummi") only meant that Shah Abdul Latif was not an "*ahl al Kitab*" (though the *Kitab* or Law in the form of the Qur'an he knew quite well) ; he was a man of *tariqah,* and not of *shari'ah* in the strict sense of the term.

There were many historical changes during his life-time, but he was not concerned with them directly. The contemporary history passed through the crucible of his mind

1. It is not 1160 A. H., as stated by Sigma in *Something about Sindh,* 1882, p. 5. Evidently, he lost sight of the letter 'h' (which is equivalent to 5) in the word "*gardidah*" in the chronogram, quoted in the last foot-note.

and expressed itself in his *kalam* ; he, by expressing himself, gave the most vocal expression to his times. Thus, he was the most representative Sindhi poet of his age. Besides, there was, as we have observed, an inner integrity in his life and work. His life was a piece of poetry and his poetry an unconscious record of his life. The two parts were the one organic whole. He was the author of *one* work and we ought to read all his Surs in order to appreciate any one of them. A man of *'Ishq Haqiqi*, or the True Love, in his life, his *Risalo* is one long wail of *firaq*, or separation.

Ever aware of the reality which had its roots in the rural Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif never lost contact with the simple colloquial speech. Whereas many of his contemporaries adopted Persian, the language of their rulers, and imitated the ontlandish poets in their choice of diction, images and poetic forms, he expressed himself, as a rule, in pure and simple Sindhi and also in a simple manner even during periods of personal spiritual ferment. The Sindhi language developed a lot at his hands, as he went on apprehending finer distinctions among classes of objects and of ideas—the objects and ideas, which, though varied, speak of Unity at the base. He described his impersonalised emotion in the indigenous Doha form and enriched it (Doha) with his many innovations. Thus, the Sindhi *bait* became a blanket term for several kinds of the Doha form—Doha, Soratha, Baro Duho, Tunveri Duho and their varied placings side by side. He recited his *baits* to create a definite ethos for his Wai songs—the Wai songs, which he sang in the melodic folk forms. The effortless use of Alankaras in his poetry gives us the feeling of being in a particular place at a particular time. He *saw* and described and let us *see* what he saw. He devised the impersonal Vibhavas (objective correlatives) to express his personal emotions effectively enough to engender Rasa in us. Essentially a lyrical poet, he objectified his emotions by describing the main events

in the life-stories of his heroines Sasui, Marui, Sohni, Nuri and others.

Shah Abdul Latif imbibed the best of Islam and Hinduism and helped develop a type of Sufism which was more Indian in its character. His work *Risalo* is not a philosophical treatise, but it propounds through the love-songs the doctrine of *advaita*. *Advaitavada* in its political and social implications is opposed to the narrow set-up of theocracy and to the vast disparities on grounds of wealth, heredity, etc. Religion of the Sufi poet is universal brotherhood. Though he was born in a particular religious community, he belongs to the one family of Man.

Sachal Sarmast

Sachal Sarmast's poetry, according to Dr. U.M. Daudpota, though extensive in range and typical by itself, cannot come up to the level of Shah Abdul Latif's verse. His *kafis* and *ghazals* are unrivalled in their own way. Although a *hafiz* of the Qur'an and learned in Islamic law, he dabbles in the extremes of exaggeration, surpassing even Mansur al-Hallaj in his blasphemies, and on this account his poetry is not liked by the generality of orthodox people.

H.T. Sorley
The Gazetteer of West Pakistan :
Sind Region, 1968.

A mixture of admiration and detestation, appreciation and misunderstading, this prefatory note looks ambivalently at Sachal Sarmast (1739-1827) and his great, 'intoxicated' poetry. Compared to the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif, to whom all roads seem sooner or later to lead back in the study of the literature of Sindh[1] Sachal Sarmast's poetry is described in it to be 'typical *by itself*', which it is not, and 'dabbling in the extremes of exaggeration', which it does not do. Both the poets, for that matter all the Sufi poets of Sindh, basically represent one and the same local style and present one and the same set of images and themes. Sachal Sarmast followed the

1. Cf. C. Shackle, "Styles and Themes in the Siraiki Mystical Poetry of Sind", a paper in *Sind Through the Centuries*, edited by Hamida Khuhro, Karachi, 1981, p. 253.

same tradition as that of his predecessor Shah Abdul Latif. The latter had also been unorthodox in his ways and voice: contrary to what the orthodox priests said, he held,

> To be one with Him,
> Set aside the chapters of *shari'ah* and be *kafir*.[1]

But what had been Shah Abdul Latif's open secret was Sachal Sarmast's no secret at all: the latter ridiculed the orthodox people openly, without mincing words. Shah Abdul Latif expressed the unity of existence through the life-stories of his heroines, metaphorically. And Sachal Sarmast did so, literally. Significantly, Shah Abdul Latif foretold about Sachal Sarmast (when the latter was only 5) that he would in his grown-up age take the lid off from the kettle he had set to boil. Sachal Sarmast really took the lid off. And again, it meant something very significant when Sachal adopted the pseudonym of *Ashikar* (Open) in his Persian poetry and *Sarmast* (Intoxicated) in his Sindhi, Siraiki and Urdu poetry.

Islamists and some of the Western scholars of Islam look at the Sindhi Sufi poetry from the Islamic point of view. Like the Islamist U.M. Daudpota in the prefatory note here, the Western Islamist scholar Annemarie Schimmel in her extensive work on Sufism in Sindh adores Sachal Sarmast on the one hand and dislikes him on the other. C. Shackle steers clear out of this ambivalence in his very perceptive paper "Styles and Themes in the Siraiki Mystical Poetry of Sind" and emphasises the natural local style for the proper understanding of the Sindhi Sufi poetry, using, as it does, the native language, poetic forms, images and themes.[2] While Schimmel holds that the pantheistic impression which is created by this poetry "is certainly not correct but can easily be deduced from this poetry if its

1. Cf. "Shah Jun Tubyun" in *Tuhfe Latif*, Karachi, 1958, pp. 51-52.
2. C. Shackle, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-69.

images are taken at face value, for the poets in this tradition liked to identify themselves with everything created and claimed that in moment they were Jesus, in the next Moses, that they were now the flood and now Noah".[1] Shackle is of the view that "it is through God's indwelling in man that the mystic may come to find Him and realisation of this entails the rejection of a dualistic level of thinking and its concomitant reliance upon the exterior commandments of one particular religion".[2] The pantheistic images are there in this poetry, naturally; these images authentically present themselves to the Sufi poets. They are to be taken at the value they represent, and not "at face value" only.

Then, why call Sufism an Islamic phenomenon only and put a gloss of Islamic ideas over it ? We know, the Sufis never had a comfortable place in Islam. From Mansur al-Hallaj to Sarmad, the Sufis met martyrdom at the hands of the orthodox people.

Mansur al-Hallaj, who for the first time showed metaphysical speculation in his outpourings, travelled extensively throughout Sindh and discussed, as Schimmel says, "theological problems with the sages of this country". And an equally great author, Max Horten, tells us, "Al-Hallaj's statement *ana' l-Haqq* was an echo of *aham Brahmasmi* of the Upanishads." Was not Sufism greatly influenced by Indian thought ? Schimmel discards the theory, and rightly so, that Sufism is an Islamised form of Vedanta philosophy; but she should also concede that nor is it purely Islamic. Sufism, as we have known it over the centuries, is neither Islamic (for it goes contrary to the basic tenet of monotheism in Islam) nor Hinduistic (though it comes quite close to it, for its pantheism). It may be both, for it is not a creed. It is a way of life which is

1. A. Schimmel, *As through A Veil*, New York, 1982, p. 158.
2. C. Shackle, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

non-dualistic, and may depend for its sustenance on various religious ideas. The editor of Sachal Sarmast's poetry rightly observes that "Sufism is quite natural to the Sindhis, Muslim and Hindu...Sachal Sarmast was the hero of not only Muslims but also Hindus; Hindus have accepted him with pride as their spiritual leader..."[1]

Why is Sufism so natural to the Sindhis? Is it because the way it is, it refreshes for Muslims, converted from Hinduism as they were in large numbers, the racial/regional memory[2] and re-presents for Hindus their age-old pantheistic ideas? Habits die hard and *samskaras*, or psychic impressions, die hardly. Shah Abdul Latif celebrates the doctrine of Unity of Existence in the Sur Ramkali, as indeed everywhere in his *Risalo*:

> The Jogis wear loin-cloth and need no ablutions,
> They hear the holy call that sounded
> even before the advent of Islam;
> They sever all ties
> and meet their guide, Gorakhnath.[3]

And Sachal Sarmast reiterates:

> Today, came a Jogi, whose name I didn't know;
> seeing him freshened up my memory...

---

1. Uthman Ali Ansari, ed., *Risalo Sachal Sarmast*, Hyderabad Sindh, 1958, p. 9 (Introduction).

2. Cf. A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, Leiden-Koln, 1980, p.143: she says about Bullhe Shah (1680-1758), a senior contemporary of Sachal Sarmast and a poet in Panjabi, "Bullhe Shah of Qasur was a disciple of Shah Inayat Qadiri, who came from an *arain* family (*recent converts to Islam*), had a good knowledge of Hindu customs and philosophy... He preferred a retired life *because after Dara Shikoh's execution the atmosphere was not favourable to the Qadiriyya.* But his disciple, Bullhe Shah who led a celibate life, did not care for any prohibition and poured out his feeling of all-pervading unity in daring, most musical verses (kafis) which still are loved in the country" (emphases mine).

3. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", VII/15, p. 417.

Sachal divulges the secret:
he was no other than Ranjha,
the Prince of Takht Hazara.[1]

The Sufis were great integrators, a great factor in building up the secular nationalism in India.

II

Abdul Wahhab, who came to be known as Sachal Sarmast —*Sachal* because he was 'the Truthful One' and *Sarmast* for he was 'God-intoxicated' all the time—was born in 1739 in the village of Daraz (which, later, in his honour came to be called Dar-e-raz, or the Gateway of Divine Mystery) in Khairpur, a princely state in Sindh. We remember Sachal Sarmast and his oft-described personality is conjured up before our mind's eye—a man of middle stature, having deer-like big melancholy eyes, a shining forehead, long hair and a soft flowing beard. He wore a simple dress, ate vegetarian food, a small quantity of it twice a day in a *kishta* (a bowl of the faqirs), and never smoked or took any other intoxicant. A lover of solitude, he was divinely intoxicated, and his state of ecstasy expressed itself in his poetry.

His lineage goes back to Umar Farooq, the second Caliph succeeding Prophet Muhammad. When the Arabs marched their way to Sindh in 712, Shihabuddin, one of Umar Farooq's descendents and a General in the Arab army, came along with them. After the conquest of Sindh, he took up a gubernatorial position in Sehwan, then called Shivasthan. Shihabuddin's two sons also became Governors of Sehwan in Sindh, successively. A few generations after them, the Farrooq family became an almost Sindhi family because of its matrimonial alliances outside its pale. The Mir of Khairpur state conferred upon it a *jagir* (estate) for its loyal services. It was however with Sahibdino, the grandfather of Sachal Sarmast and a Sufi

1. *Sachal Sarmast Jo Chunda Kalam*, ed. by Kalyan Advani (hereafter abbreviated as *SSJCK* (KA), New Delhi, 1963, p. 169 (also, see pp. 12-19).

poet in his own right, that the Farooq family became a-political. Sahibdino resigned from the service in the Mir's court and took to the life of asceticism.

Sahibdino had two sons, Salahuddin and Abdul Haqq. The older son Salahuddin was the father of Abdul Wahhab 'Sachal Sarmast'. Abdul Wahhab was a mystic from his childhood. When on a visit to the Sahibdino family, Shah Abdul Latif chanced to see the young Wahhab, he instantly saw the divine mystery divulged large on his face and called him Sachal, the Truthful One..

Sachal was yet a little boy when his father died. His paternal uncle Abdul Haqq took him under his wings: he became his guardian and preceptor, and later his father-in-law. Sachal, at the instance of his uncle, married his daughter at a very young age. But as Fate would have it, his wife died after two years of the marriage—childless, for she herself was a child. He never married again and led a celibate life.

In the company of his uncle, Sachal drank deep from the cup of mystic lore. Though by the time he was 20 he remembered the Qur'an by heart, he was greatly influenced by the Parsian poetry of Attar and Hafiz. It was Abdul Haqq who led him on the Sufi path. Sachal loved and respected him so much that he saw in him Truth Itself. He says:

> My preceptor is Abdul Haqq:
> not an *abd al-Haqq*, a servant of Truth or God,
> he is *Haqq al-Haqq*, Truth of Truth or God of God.[1]

He knew that the Master-servant relationship between God and man was based on dualism against which he raised his voice. He says:

> Abandon the dualistic servitude, come back to Unity;
> Forget the bonds of flesh so that you are Pristine Purity yourself.[2]

1. *SSJ CK* (KA), p. 2 (Introduction).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Like his idolised hero Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 922), he maintained that "*kufr* (infidelity) and *iman* (faith) differ in name, but in reality there is no difference between them"[1] and trode severely on the toes of the orthodox priests. He called the Mullas and Makhdums of his day a company of tyrants who frightened the people with tortures in the hell and knew nothing of love, and their calling a fraud for it thrived on a 'professional puritanical spirituality'. He says :

> We became neither Sheikhs nor Makhdums,
> neither Qazis nor Mullas, nor Pirs ;
> We deviced no such hypocritical creeds,
> we learnt only the art of God's love.[2]

He was vehemently against the religionists in both Islam and Hinduism. An outspoken Sufi poet, Sachal Sarmast says :

> It is the religions
> which have misled people in the country ;
> The Sheikhdoms and Pirdoms
> have awfully misguided them ;
> Some people bend in mosques and others bow in temples
> but the pseudo-wise don't come nearby Love.[3]

And to the new young brotherhood of Sikhs he says :

> O Granthi, chant the Japa-ji verses,
> and you will meet the Guru ;
> Use the knife of love, cut off hatred and intolerance,
> on your both left and right he is one and the same Satguru.[4]

Among his disciples was Yusuf. Yusuf visited the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Thereafter Sachal always called him Nanak Yusuf as a mark of respect to the great Guru Nanak. A poet of the Bhakti movement, Sachal refers to the Guru

---

1. Cf. Mansur al-Hallaj, *Akhbar al-Hallaj*, ed. L. Massignon and Paul Kraus, 3rd ed., Paris, 1957 No. 35, p. 53.
2. *SSJ CK* (KA), p. 111.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

and the Murshid in the same breath :

The *kalima* of unity of being
the Murshid himself taught me ;
The Guru conducted me
into the realm of Nothingness.[1]

III

Hinduism is not a religion in the Semitic sense of the term. The Semitic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam make a distinction between God and man and establish a personal relationship between them. But the Hindu 'religion' (the term is used for the sake of convenience) doesn't make such a distinction and has nothing to do with the *religion's* etymological sense (basad on Semiticism) of "binding together" or "relatedness". Hinduism means the Way of Life (*dharma*) even as Sufism means the Path (*tariqah*). Under the canopy of Hinduism and Sufism, man doesn't relate to God in the manner he does under that of the Semitic religions. Whereas he cannot identify himself with God under the latter, he does so within the former (*Tat twam asi*, or 'thou art That'; *hame ost*, or 'everything is He'). The real mystical experience is possible in the pantheistic Hinduism and Sufism, for in both of them man identifies with the universal being and is a part of the unity of existence. Sachal Sarmast laments the humble state man is reduced to and declares himself to be Truth himself :

I feel sorrow—what I really am
and what I have become !
I know not why I have become a servant ;
else I am truly the Emperor !
All wise in that realm,
I have become an ignoramus here.
The rare ones know this,
the real ones in the arena realise this.
From time immemorial I have been carrying
a burden of sorrows here.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

From one place to another
I have been only a guest :
A wave rises from the sea
and returns to be one with it again.
This wonder has caused Sachal
amazement, every moment.[1]

* * *

Sometimes Christ, sometimes Moses myself ;
sometimes as Pharao I have ruled and issued orders ;
Sometimes as Mansur, sometimes as Shams al-Haqq
I have invited troubles on my head ;
Sometimes as Darius, sometimes as Alexander
I have overrun domains ;
Sometimes Ayaz, sometimes Mahmood,
sometimes a slave I have called myself ;
Sometimes as Laila, sometimes as Majnun
I have wailed in the lanes ;
Sometimes as Zulaikha, sometimes as Yusuf,
sometimes as the Emperor of Egypt I have appeared ;
Sometimes Rama-Sita, sometimes Lakshman,
sometimes I have also been Ravana ;
Sometimes I have preached a lot (like a Mulla),
sometimes I have dilated on Mystery ;
Presently I have come here assuming the name of Sachal
and sung many a song of spirit.[2]

* * *

I know not, O friends, what I really am !
Sometimes I think I am a puppet,
sometimes the thread with which it is tied ;
Perhaps I am a ball in the Beloved's hand,
or perhaps a top spin ;
Maybe, I am a palace wherein the Emperor, the Wise One,
talks in many a tongue and means one and the same

1. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-64.

Or I am a horse, the Rider drives ;
Or I am a wave which drowns the external shore ;
Or I am a henna flower with redness within it ;
Or I am a rose, full of fragrance ;
Perhaps I am a fountain,
the water of which reflects the sun and the moon
Or I am a reflection of Truth from the very beginning
Or that which is nothing, I am not ;
Sachal has understood from his Preceptor this much only :
That I am not different from God, I am the Master always.[1]

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-32 ; Kalyan Advani and A. Schimmel translate this poem in their works, *Sachal Sarmast*, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 9-10 and *Sindhi Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 22, respectively. Whereas Advani has rendered the whole poem, Schimmel has left out the last two "blasphemous" lines.

Sindhi Sufis : The Great Integrators

Moses saw a shepherd on the way, craving, 'O Lord, where art Thou, that I may serve Thee and sew Thy shoes and comb Thy hair ? That I may wash Thy clothes and kill Thy lice and bring milk to Thee, O Worshipful One.'

On hearing these foolish words, Moses said, 'Man, to whom are you speaking ? What babble ; What blasphemy and raving ! Stuff some cotton into your mouth !......The High God is not in want of such like service.'

The shepherd rent his garment, heaved a sigh, and took his way to wilderness. Then came to Moses a Revelation : 'Thou hast parted My servant from Me...I have bestowed on everyone a particular mode of worship ; I have given everyone a peculiar form of expression. The idiom of Hindustan is excellent for Hindus, the idiom of Sind is excellent for the people of Sind...'

—"The Shepherd's Prayer"
by Rumi in R.A. Nicholson's
Rumi, Poet and Mystic, London, 1950

We are bound in one great familial relationship not only on this planet in its East and West, but also outside it with the whole universe in its stars and other planets. All of the organised religions aver that ours is, like the microcosmic domestic family, a big macrocosmic family of various hyphenated relationships of Husband-wife, Head-member (of the family), Parent-child, Father-son, Master-servant, etc.

Different religions emphasise different hyphenated relationships in accordance with their peculiar world-views born of their peculiar ethnic ideas and customs. But they are, basically, one and the same in their pointings towards one family of man (the word "man" is used here in its human specific sense, and not in the sexist one). This diversity is adorable in that it meaningfully favours the unity of the Family.

In Islam, the youngest among the major religions of the world, the Master-servant relationship describes the entities of God and man in the universe. God is Peerless ; none is beside Him. He is the Master and man is a servant. And a servant cannot be the Master. He remains a servant, although he may gradually acquire nearness to Him by assimilating His attributes. We have often noticed the prefix of '*abd* in many Muslim first-names, e.g., Abdul Haqq and Abdul Latif. An '*abd* means a servant, and the names Abdul Haqq and Abdul Latif connote "a servant of God, the Real" and "a servant of God, the Gracious" respectively.

The father-son relationship characterises Christianity : Jesus Christ, the divine son of the Divine God, knows his Father's will and tries to redeem his fellow-beings from the original sin.

Judaism, in a way the parent of both Christianity and Islam, combines the attributes of the two religions and looks at the God-man relationship as that of the Divine Majestic Parent and His subject child, who must obey Him. In dealing with the High God, he cannot but bind himself with the Jewish articles of faith.

The three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have in them God who is Absolute. And He is Attributeless. But in order to grasp the full meaning of the Reality of God, the devout simple believers of these faiths

adhere in their personal mystical ways to the anthropomorphic images of God, as visualised in these hyphenated relationships, and invest their faiths with a kind of polytheism. We can look at this diversity of gods in space (different local gods at different places) and time (the Massiahs and the Paighambars at different times). Thus, the philosopher's one God becomes many, all-too-human gods. The poem "The Shepherd's Prayer" by Rumi, quoted in the very beginning, brings out vividly the two approaches of the philosopher and the devout simple people.

As the poem would suggest in its extended sense, Buddhists have their own peculiar form of expression. They do not recognise God or godhead. Instead of 'inventing' some supernatural Power, they believe in one among them, *i.e.*, the Buddha, and in the union of such ones among them, *i.e.*, the Sangha, and in the path shown by him and them, *i.e.*, the Dhamma. The Head of the family or the Enlightened Leader in the Sangha holds the light for and shows the path to its suffering members—the Path to *Nirvana*, or liberation, from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Buddhism is not a religion in the sense it recognises no God. Hinduism is also not a religion in that it has no single founder, as the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have. At once monotheistic, henotheistic, monistic and qualified-monistic (but mainly monistic), Hinduism could best be described as a way of life. Whatever religion came to India, it therefore found itself akin to one of its many religious expressions, or to the Indian way of life. Even the Muslims of India are the Indian Muslims with peculiarities of their own in spite of their being in one organised religious community (it reminds us of M. Mujeeb's book *The Indian Muslims*, London, 1967). They are a type by themselves.

This explains why Sufism, the so-called Islamic mysticism, when it was introduced in India, became characteristically Indian in its subscribing to the essentially un-Islamic doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud*—the monistic doctrine, which was formulated by the mystic eclectics in the Islamic fold as an equivalent to Unity of Existence, and for which they paid heavily in their lives, and some of them with their lives. Sufism in India remained Indian in experience and expression. A few orthodox Islamic movements like the one launched by Shaikh Ahmad of Sarhind tried to reorient Indian Sufism to the more Islamic character (for Sufism even outside India, even in Islamic countries, would never become purely Islamic), but they did not succeed in their missions.

Indian Sufism, for that matter Indian mysticism in general, has been through the centuries describing the relationship between God and man as between the familial Husband and wife. This conjugal relationship is the basic metaphor for the fuller understanding of our material and spritual life. No type of Sufism outside India has in it the sweet and sublime resolution of the antithetical forms of subject and object of love.

Sufis of the medieval India celebrated the intimate, hyphenated relationship of Husband-wife in their poetry. For instance, Kabir (1398-1518) says :

> Rama is my Husband,
> I am His little bride.

And Qazi Qadan (1463-1551) extends this metaphorical relationship to include the in-laws also :

> True are my relatives on the Husband's side,
> they dwell in the city of Truth ;
> Whatever they speak comes out from truth :
> they say the truthful words. (25)

* + *

Loving are my relatives :
they live in the city of Lovingkindness;
Whatever they say to me is out of loving care (26)

* * *

From the Beloved's side,
the seasonal bird *papiha* came here ;
People couldn't recognise him,
but we talked to each other. (64)

* * *

Don't make a litany of your 'I', 'I',
and thereby insult the Husband ;
Even though you have ground your ego very thin,
hang on the handle of the grinding-stone. (73)

■ So do the other Sindhi Sufi poets.

A picture of happy, conjugal love emerges from these illustrations from the Indian mystical poetry. If the true love exists between a worldly husband and wife and the microcosmic family is not broken, all other familial relationships of head-member, parent-child, father-son, master-servant, etc., will take care of themselves. And it is true about the broad soul-Supersoul macrocosmic family.

Moreover, if some of us don't believe in any theological God and His macrocosmic family (a recent study has shown, 40 per cent of those who had the mystical experience were, paradoxically, agnostic), they can at least place their faith in man and woman on the earth and their happy family life in its intimate, hyphenated husband-wife relationship. This in itself is a great moral gain, a high seriousness and a deep spirituality.

II

As discussed earlier, *moksa* and *fana fi l-lah wa baqua bi l-lah*, *advatia* and *wahdah al-wujud* and the Hindu doctrine of 'modified monism' and the Muslim view of *tanazzluat* present striking similarities. Since the early contacts of

the Arabs with the Indian soil, mutual appreciation of the two religions has been growing, and the study of both the Hindu and Muslim ways has revealed the methods of man's release from the bondage of flesh. The establishment of the Muslim power at Delhi opened the way for mutual recognition of not only metaphysical doctrines but also of aesthetic values. The first serious start in this direction made by Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) reached its climax in the earnest efforts made by Dara Shikoh whose rendering of the Upanishads in Persian is an event in the world literature. With the rise of Bhakti movement, the exclusiveness of the historical religious communities stood greatly challenged and the direct appeal (regardless of the ritual and law) to God was highly favoured.

Shah Abdul Latif and Sachal Sarmast were the late participators in the Bhakti movement which had a major impact in Sindh through the spread of Guru Nanak's (1469-1539) teachings. Qazi Qadan, Shah Abdul Karim, Shah Inat, Shah Abdul Latif and Sachal Sarmast formed part of the Bhakti movement in Sindh. But it was Shah Abdul Latif who stood in it as its representative figure for in him Indian Sufism, which was tempered with the thought of Vedanta and the emotion of Bhakti, found an embodiment.[1] In fact, Sufism in its Indian type was very much like Bhaktism. It envisaged devotional surrender to God with the ultimate goal of merger in Him. Like Bhaktism, Sufism too protested against all forms of dogma and priestly authority. Bhaktism or Bhakti is a blanket term for many kinds of religious experience existing simultaneously in one poet or in different poets of one period,

1. Cf. K.M. Sen, *Hinduism*, London 1961, p. 102. K. M. Sen writes, "Just as in the medieval mysticism of other areas the Bhaki tradition was influenced by Sufi thought so here (in Sindh) the Sufi tradition did not remain uninfluenced by Bhakti thought. The seventeenth century gave the movement Shah Karim and Shah Inayat ; Shah Latif was born in 1689 ; and this tradition has continued to the present day."

that is, the *saguna* poetry (seeking personal God) in the Saiva or Vaisnava way and the *nirguna* poetry (seeking impersonal God) from the various stand-points of dualists, monotheists, monists and qualified monists. The *nirguna* poetry, as of the Sindhi poets including Shah Abdul Latif, has in it, intertwined in one strand, monism of both *advaita* and *tasawwuf*. Then the term *bhakti*, which literally means devotion, humility and seeking grace from God, also makes room for the metaphysical quest or rational endeavour to know oneself beside the Supreme Self and to get merged ultimately in Him. Very often than not, the bhakta refuses to behave like a *bhakta* or devotee (he asserts that he is *Brahman* himself). At times, the *'abid* or suppliant says that he is not *'abd* or servant ; he claims to be H*aqq* or the Absolute Truth himself. The Bhakti movement, curious as it is, represents both devotion and knowledge in a mutually inclusive way.[1] It not only gives expression to the *dasya bhava* or emotion of voluntary servitude (as in Ravidasa) the *sakhya bhava* or emotion of friendliness (as in Surdasa), the *madhurya bhava* or emotion pertaining to husband and wife (as in Mira, Kabir and the Sindhi Sufi poets, including Shah Abdul Latif), but also to the supra-*bhakta ekatva bhava* or feeling of Oneness. The *ekatva bhava* may come through the stages of the above *bhavas*. Out of these *bhavas*, one *bhava* may be prominent in one poet, and the other in another one, as the *madhurya bhava* is conspicuous in the Sindhi Sufi poets, but they all, more or less, prevail in every poet and lead him, one by one, to the consciousness where the *dvaita* or duality between *dasa* (servant) and *swami* (master), between two *sakhas* (friends), and between wife and husband simply does not exist. Then one sees unity

1. Cf. "Adi Sankaracharya's Bhaja Govindam" by C. Rojagopalachari in the *Bhavan's Journal*, February 22, 1970, p. 21. C. R. says, "To hold and to say that *jnana* and *bhakti*, knowledge and devotion, are as different from each other as gold is from baser metal is to expose one's ignorance."

of all creation regardless of caste, creed and colour and feels to be the One Himself. Then there is neither high nor low, neither a king nor a subject.

The Bhakti movement espoused the view that the Ultimate Reality is One, without *guna* or *rupa*, that is, without attributes or forms. Even if the Sufi poets invoked the name of Rama, it was not strictly in an anthropomorphic sense ; it was as a synonym of God. The Bhakti movement inspired, among other things, a new confidence in the subjects who had been suppressed by the rulers so much over the centuries that they had adopted their (rulers') dress and language in their life. The Sufi poets stood for sartorial freedom, and also used languages of the masses. They gave expression to the native legends and folk-stories. They did not like that the people should be subjected to the levy of tax on their shrines and gods. The works of the Sindhi Sufi poets are prominently marked by the features of this movement.

The Sufi poets were against both the Mulla and the Panda for they both had become blind towards their true path and had engaged themselves in the religious rituals of reciting holy maxims, observing fasts and praying to God for a fixed number of times a day. They made it clear to them that though the prayers and sacred fasts were virtuous things, it was certainly another art which brought us before the Beloved, face to face. The Hindus and the Muslims use rosary (*mala* or *tasbih*) as an aid to concentration on God. Shah Abdul Latif and others laid stress on making body a rosary, mind a bead and heart a harp. They held that the human body itself was the means of all religious experience and rejected the hollow priestly rites and rituals. Besides, there is, according to them, nothing high or low about the humans. All are equal. Shah Abdul Latif says :

> Bestowal is regardless of caste and creed,
> all who seek may obtain Him.[1]

1. *SJR* (KA), "Sur Prabhati", I/10, p. 450.

And again :

Ask not for any caste ; whosover comes, he is accepted.[1]

The Sindhi Sufi poets helped generate love and friendship between the two religious communities with all their sects and castes. The Hindus who would previously avoid taking the name of Allah or mouthing some such words for fear of being forcibly initiated into Islam by the fanatic Muslims felt so much confident in the new body-social of Sindh that they would not hesitate to recite quotations from the Qur'an and the Hadith in their *baits* for those quotations revealed, along with the unfolding of Vedantic thought therein, their composite view.[2] The proselytizing activity of the fanatic Muslims lost much of its momentum and the critical attitude towards orthodoxy characterised both the communities of Hindus and Muslims. Shah Abdul Latif could see that if someone tried to establish Islam in exclusion of all other religions, that fanatic might as well endeavour to establish one particular sect of Muslims in exclusion of other sects. Although he was a Shi'a (that he was a Shi'a is evidenced by the fact that he in the last years of his life wished to visit Karbala rather than Mecca) and the Sunnis were in majority in Sindh, he was a spiritual teacher of both the sects as also of the Hindus. He used to say that he was neither a Shi'a nor a Sunni, nor a Hindu, and was all in one. Though the Sindhi Sufi poets were born in the religious group of Muslims, they were not bound by any creed. Each one of them was a Sufi, *la-kufi*, non-aligned and *sans* any religious dogmas.

---

1. *Ibid.*, "Sur Mumal Rano", IX/5, p. 266.
2. See *SJR* (KA), "Sur Ramkali", III/Wai-1, p. 405. Shah Abdul Latif says, "We entered the shrine in the holy company of *la illah* (solely Allah, there being none except Him) and *Satguru* (The True Guide, very often synonym of God in the saint/Sufi poetry)."

Index

1960 جي ڏهاڪي ۾ عبدالله حسين ” اُداس نسلين“ نالي ڪتاب لکيو. 70 واري ڏهاڪي ۾ وري ماڻِڪَ ”لُڙهندَڙ نَسُل“ نالي ڪتاب لکي پنهنجي دورَ جي عڪاسي ڪرڻ جي ڪوشش ڪئي. امداد حُسينيءَ وري 70 واري ڏهاڪي ۾ئي لکيو:

انڌي ماءُ ڄڻيندي آهي اونڌا سونڌا ٻارَ
ايندڙ نسل سَمورو هوندو گونگا ٻوڙا ٻارَ

هر دور جي نوجوانن کي اُداس، لُڙهندَڙ، ڪَڙهندڙ، ڪُڙهندڙ، ٻَرندڙ، ڇُرندڙ، ڪِرَندڙ، اوسيئڙو ڪَندَڙُ، ياڙي، ڪاٺُو، ياڄوڪَڙُ، ڪاوڙيل ۽ وِڙَهندڙ نسلن سان منسوب ڪري سَگهجي ٿو، پَر اسان اِنهن سيني وِچان ”پڙهندڙ“ نسل جا ڳولائو آهيون. ڪتابن کي ڪاڳر تان ڪٽي ڪمپيوُٽر جي دنيا ۾ آڻڻ، ٻين لفظن ۾ برقي ڪتاب يعنى e-books ناهي ورهائڻ جي وسيلي پڙهندڙ نسل کي وَڌَڻ، ويجهَڻ ۽ هِڪَ ٻِئي کي ڳولي سَهڪاريِ تحريڪ جي رستي تي آڻِڻَ جي آسَ رکون ٿا.

پَڙهندڙ نَسل (پَنَ) ڪا بہ تنظيمَ ناهي. اُنَ جو ڪو بہ صدر، عُهديدار يا پايو وِجهندڙ نہ آهي. جيڪڏهن ڪو بہ شخص اهڙي دعوىٰ ڪري ٿو تہ پَڪَ ڄاڻو تہ اُهو ڪُوڙو آهي. نہ ئي وري پَنَ جي نالي ڪي پئسا گڏ ڪيا

ويندا. جيڪڏهن ڪو اهڙي ڪوشش ڪري ٿو ته پَڪَ ڄاڻو ته اُهو بِه ڪُوڙو آهي.

جَهڙيءَ طَرَح وڻن جا پَنَ ساوا، ڳاڙها، نيلا، پيلا يا ناسي هوندا آهن اَهڙيءَ طرح پڙهندڙ نَسُل وارا پَنَ بہ مختَلِف آهن ۽ هوندا. اُهي ساڳئي ئي وقت اُداس ۽ پڙهندڙ، بَرندڙ ۽ پڙهندڙ، سُست ۽ پڙهندڙ يا وِڙهندڙ ۽ پڙهندڙ بہ ٿي سگهن ٿا. بين لفظن ۾ پَنَ ڪا خُصوصي ۽ تالي لڳل ڪِلَب Exclusive Club نہ آهي.

ڪوشش اها هوندي تہ پَنَ جا سڀ ڪَم ڪار سَهڪاري ۽ رَضاڪار بنيادن تي ٿين، پر ممڪن آهي تہ ڪي ڪم اُجرتي بنيادن تي بہ ٿِين. اهڙي حالت ۾ پَنَ پاڻ هِڪ‌ٻِئي جي مدد ڪَرڻ جي اُصولَ هيٺ ڏي وَٺُ ڪندا ۽ غيرتجارتي non-commercial رهندا. پَنَن پاران ڪتابن کي ڊِجيِٽائِيز digitize ڪرڻ جي عَملَ مان ڪو بہ مالي فائدو يا نفعو حاصل ڪرڻ جي ڪوشش نہ ڪئي ويندي.

ڪتابن کي ڊِجيِٽائِيز ڪرڻ کان پو ٻيو اهم مرحلو وِرهائڻ distribution جو ٿيندو. اِهو ڪم ڪرڻ وارن مان جيڪڏهن ڪو پيسا ڪمائي سگهي ٿو تہ ڀلي ڪمائي، رُڳو پَنَن سان اُن جو ڪو بہ لاڳاپو نہ هوندو.

پَنَن کي ڪُليل اڪرن ۾ صلاح ڏجي ٿي تہ هو وَسَ پٽاندڙ وڏِ کان وَڌِ ڪتاب خريد ڪَري ڪتابن جي ليکڪَن، ڇپائيندڙن ۽ ڇاپيندڙن کي هِمٿائِن. پر ساڳئي وقت عِلم حاصل ڪرڻ ۽ ڄاڻ کي ڦهلائڻ جي ڪوشش دوران ڪَنهن بہ رُڪاوٽ کي نہ مڃن.

شيخ اَيازَ علمَ، ڄاڻ، سمجهہَ ۽ ڏاهپَ کي گيتَ، بيتَ، سِٽَ، پُڪارَ سان تَشبيهہ ڏيندي انهن سيني کي بَمن، گولين ۽ بارودَ جي مدِ مقابل بيهاريو آهي. اياز چوي ٿو تہ:

گيتَ بہِ ڄڻ گوريلا آهن، جي ويريءَ تي وار ڪَرن ٿا.

... ...

ڄئن ڄئن ڄاڙ وڏي ٿي ڄڳَ ۾، هو ٻوليءَ جي آڙ ڇُپن ٿا؛
ريتيءَ تي راتاها ڪن ٿا، موتي مَنجهہِ پهاڙ ڇُپن ٿا؛

... ...

ڪالههَ هُيا جي سُرخ گُلن جيئن، اڄڪلهہ نيلا پيلا آهن:
گيتَ بہِ ڄڻ گوريلا آهن........

... ...

هي بيتُ اَٿي، هي بَم ـ گولو، جيڪي بہ ڪٽين، جيڪي بہ ڪٽين!
مون لاءِ ٻنهي ۾ فَرَقُ نہ آ، هي بيتُ بہ بَمَ جو ساٿي آ،
جنهن رِڻَ ۾ رات ڪَيا راڙا، تنهن هَڏَ ۽ چَمَ جو ساٿي آ ـ

اِن حسابَ سان اڄڪالهہ ڪي پاڻَ تي اِهو سوچي مَڙهڻ تہ ”هاڻي ويڙهہ ۽ عمل جو دور آهي، اُن ڪري پڙهڻ تي وقت نہ وڃايو“ نادانيءَ جي نشاني آهي.

پَنَ جو پڙهڻ عام ڪِتابي ڪيڙن وانگر رُڳو نِصابي ڪتابن تائين محدود نہ هوندو. رڳو نصابي ڪتابن ۾ پاڻ کي قيد ڪري ڇڏڻ سان سماج ۽ سماجي حالتن تان نظر ڪڄي ويندي ۽ نتيجي طور سماجي ۽ حڪومتي پاليسيون policies اڄڪالهہ ۽ نادانن جي هٿن ۾ رهنديون. پَنَ نِصابي ڪتابن سان گڏوگڏ ادبي، تاريخي، سياسي، سماجي، اقتصادي، سائنسي ۽ ٻين ڪتابن کي پڙهي سماجي حالتن کي بهتر بڻائڻ جي ڪوشش ڪندا.

پڙهندڙ نَسُل جا پَنَ سيني کي **چو، چاالاءِ ۽ ڪينئن** جهڙن سوالن کي هر بَيانَ تي لاڳو ڪرڻ جي ڪوشَ ڏين ٿا ۽ انهن تي ويچار ڪرڻ سان گڏ جوابَ ڳولڻ کي پنهنجو حق، فرض ۽ اٽٽر گهرج unavoidable necessity سمجهندي ڪتابن کي پاڻ پڙهڻ ۽ وڌ کان وڌ ماڻهن تائين پهچائڻ جي ڪوشش جديد ترين طريقن وسيلي ڪرڻ جو ويچار رکن ٿا.

توهان بہ پڙهڻ، پڙهائڻ ۽ ڦهلائڻ جي اِن سهڪاري تحريڪ ۾ شامل ٿي سگهو ٿا، بَس پنهنجي اوسي پاسي ۾ ڏِسو، هر قسم جا ڳاڙها توڙي نيرا، ساوا توڙي پيلا پن ضرور نظر اچي ويندا.

وڻ وڻ کي مون ياڪِي پائي چيو تہ ”منهنجا ياءُ
پهتو منهنجي من ۾ تنهنجي پَنَ پَنَ جو پڙلاءُ“.
- اياز (ڪي جو بيجل بوليو)